



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
BULGARIA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**International Day of Women and Girls in Science**

***Gender, Science and Sustainable Development: the Role of Media***

**H.E. Mr. Georgi Panayotov, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN**

**New York, 10 February 2017**

**Mr. Moderator,**

The Government of Bulgaria attaches great importance to gender equality and views it as an absolute necessity for the full realization of all human rights and the functioning of democracy. Equality before the law is a fundamental principle enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. Women and men in Bulgaria enjoy equal civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Gender-based discrimination is prohibited by law.

**Mr. Moderator,**

In the last 25 years Bulgaria has made substantial progress with regard to women's empowerment, including in science. The National Strategy for Scientific Research includes a gender dimension. Women scientists are represented in the National Council on Equality between Women and Men to the Council of Ministers.

The participation of Bulgarian women and girls in science is steadily increasing. Women in science represent almost half of all scientists in the country – 49% which is among the highest percentages in Europe. The proportion of female BA, MA and PhD students in Bulgaria is steadily increasing and at present stands at 43% which is above the average for the EU. 53% of all doctorate degrees in Bulgaria are awarded to women – annual growth of 10.9%. With these indicators Bulgaria is among the leading countries in the EU. The highest percentage of women in science in Bulgaria is in the humanities – 60% which follows the general trend in Europe. What is unique about Bulgaria is the high percentage of women in natural sciences – 49% which is among the highest in Europe. As in other European countries the percentage of women in engineering and technical sciences is still relatively low – 27%, but also growing.

Despite the high percentage of female scientists in Bulgaria women in my country still face some challenges with regard to career development in science – the percentage of female scientists in the workforce is still very low – only 1.63% which is mainly due to the persisting low percentage of women in senior academic leaderships positions – 14.4%, and the relatively low percentage of women in academic boards – 29%; this leads to unequal pay for women in science even when they have the same length of service and academic degree as their male peers. An additional factor is the more frequent interruptions of the academic career of women and their restricted horizontal mobility due to family obligations. There is also an outflow of Bulgarian women from the scientific institutions – the annual growth for women is 2.6% which is 2 times lower than that for Bulgarian male scientists; more young women than men leave the country and seek opportunities abroad immediately after obtaining their doctorate degree; the age at which Bulgarian women start their career also grows which in the long run protracts further the moment to acquire the next academic degree and often coincides with the time when women want to have children; the earlier retirement of women adds to the problem.

Now I would like to highlight some of the main **challenges that women in science still face in general**:

- the effect of the so-called grids of power (a term coined by Michel Foucault), also known as a glass ceiling, that keeps female scientists at low positions because of their social sex (gender), regardless of their efforts to get empowered by obtaining higher academic positions;
- prejudice, rejection, masculinization of the academic hierarchy and the persisting masculine culture in science;
- sexism, sexist speech and sexual harassment by male scientists;
- the so-called double burden of women scientists – balancing the commitments of work and family life without receiving much help from their spouses and colleagues;
- the still remaining patriarchal power model in societies in general;
- the lack of sensitivity to the problems of the socially constructed sex (gender) and the persistence of antifeminism which is sometimes embraced as an ideology by women themselves who have risen to high positions in science.

When speaking about **sustainable development** gender equality is considered essential for social inclusion, i.e. for the realization of the third dimension of sustainable development. Gender equality has for the first time been recognized as a separate goal for achieving sustainable development in the 2030 Agenda – Goal 5. The new Agenda underlines also the power of science as a driver for human rights, poverty eradication and the protection of the planet.

Gender equality and social cohesion based on the vision of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth are crucial for sustainable development. Sustainable development is unthinkable without

social equity and cohesion which can be realized through gender equality and creating equal opportunities for all.

With relation to science the link between sustainable development and gender equality is realized through the provision of equal and open access to education for both sexes, ensuring equal opportunities for the employment of female scientists, eliminating conditions and the existing practices of horizontal and vertical segregation of female scientists in the field of education and professional development, ensuring equal pay for equal work, etc.

### **Gender, Science and the Role of Media:**

Social environment is crucial in all efforts aimed at bridging the gender gap and media has an important role to play in promoting gender equality in science by inter alia:

- contributing to overcoming negative gender stereotypes and prejudices;
- fighting sexism, including in science;
- advocating for increased literacy and education status for both sexes;
- showcasing a balanced gender content to be presented by female experts as well;
- working with targeted audience such as young people.

### Some good practices include:

- presenting biographical and career information of female scientists;
- inviting female scientists to speak at TV shows in the public media;
- introducing strict codes of ethics and professional standards for the presentation of images of the social gender in media paying special attention to balance, visualization, challenging the traditional gender roles, avoiding sexist and offensive language, etc.;
- broadcasting women in science awards and special competitions with the participation of female scientists;
- publishing analytical materials and scientific articles of female scientists in the print media;
- showcasing female scientists as the leading factors behind different initiatives like exhibitions, translations, book presentations, public discussions, lectures, etc.;
- raising awareness in the general public and sensitizing it to gender equality in science.

**Thank you, Mr. Moderator!**