

**Message from Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, 11 February 2017**



This International Day of Women and Girls in Science is an opportunity for all to take a stand for girls and women in science.

Girls continue to face stereotypes and social and cultural restrictions, limiting access to education and funding for research, preventing them from scientific careers and reaching their full potential. Women remain a minority in science research and decision-making. This throws a shadow over all efforts to reach the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change – both of which highlight the key roles of gender equality and science.

At the same time, girls and women shoulder the heaviest burdens of poverty and inequality – they stand on the frontlines of climate change, including the disasters resulting from natural hazards. Girls and women in rural and disadvantaged areas are hit hardest.

Meaningful progress must start with the rights and dignity of women, by nurturing their ingenuity and innovation. This message was sent during the last two Conferences of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21 and 22). Humanity cannot afford to ignore half of its creative genius.

Girls and women must be empowered at every level, in learning and research, from administration to teaching, across all scientific fields. This goal underpins the Manifesto 'For Women in Science' that UNESCO launched last year with the L'Oréal Foundation, to engage Governments and stakeholders in promoting the full participation of girls and women in science. We must inspire girls and young women by offering mentoring opportunities to young women scientists to assist in their career development. We must raise awareness about the work of women scientists by providing equal opportunities for their participation and leadership in a broad spectrum of high-level scientific bodies and events.

The world needs science and science needs women. We invite everyone to sign this Manifesto <http://www.forwomeninscience.com/en/manifesto>. Together, we can make a difference.