

UNESCO's Soft Power Today
Fostering Women's Empowerment and Leadership

30 June – 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

The High-level Conference will include six panels, three parallel panels in the morning and the afternoon, lasting two hours each. The panels will discuss various aspects of the importance of gender equality and the empowerment and leadership of women and girls.

11:00 – 13:00 | Morning sessions

- "Women's Empowerment and Sustainable Development - The Power of Women's and Girls' Education"
- "Breaking Gender Stereotypes - The importance of role models in changing cultural norms"
- "Leadership and Power - Women in Politics"

14:30 – 16:30 | Afternoon sessions

- "Women's Empowerment and Sustainable Development - Women, Peace and Security"
- "Breaking Gender Stereotypes - Challenging the status quo"
- "Leadership and Power - Women in Business"

I. Women's Empowerment and Sustainable Development: The Power of Women's and Girls' education

Despite immense progress in achieving gender parity in primary education, numerous challenges remain for girls to access, complete and benefit from a full cycle of quality education. While poverty remains the main barrier, discriminatory social norms (such as early marriage or gender-based violence), the distance between the home and the school and related safety concerns, or inadequate sanitation facilities at school are among the many factors hampering girls' participation in and completion of a full cycle of education. In addition, girls are disadvantaged in terms of learning processes and outcomes. Yet, evidence also shows that an educated girl can be a powerful game changer for her, her family, community and society.

This panel will discuss the importance of achieving gender equality in education. It will explore strategies and initiatives that empower girls and women to gain the knowledge and skills for fulfilling future life opportunities. Through their personal experiences and work, as well as discussions, the panelists will also consider how UNESCO can promote quality educational pathways for girls and women and gender equality in education.

II. Breaking Gender Stereotypes: The Importance of Role Models in Changing Cultural Norms

Girls and boys are conditioned by their gender roles from birth. In science class, we learn about the contributions of Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein, but we rarely learn about the impact of female scientists such as Hypatia or Rosalind Franklin. From an early age, girls learn that they are not expected by society to become scientists, engineers, innovators, or leaders. As a result, women are still drastically underrepresented in too many areas in STEM fields, especially in leadership positions. UNESCO believes that role models can break down barriers in the minds of any girl and boy and inspire them to challenge cultural norms.

This panel will discuss the importance of mentors and role models for women and girls, and explore innovative initiatives to ensure that women and girls receive the positive encouragement they need to succeed and become leaders. Through their personal experiences and work, as well as discussion, the panelists will also discuss the way forward for UNESCO in this domain.

III. Leadership and Power: Women in Politics

Women are still severely underrepresented in political leadership worldwide and a global commitment at the highest political level is needed to improve this situation. Political participation and leadership of women worldwide is not only a goal in itself, it is also a necessary precondition for the promotion of gender transformative policies and the achievement of gender equality in all other spheres of life. UNESCO calls upon its partners and distinguished speakers to initiate a debate that can break new ground for the promotion of women in political leadership.

IV. Women's Empowerment and Sustainable Development: Women, Peace and Security

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council formally acknowledged, through the adoption of Resolution 1325, the changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly targeted, and women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes. Resolution 1325 and the follow up resolutions address not only the disproportionate impact of war on women, but also the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution, and sustainable peace.

The panel aims at exploring the achievements as well as the obstacles and challenges remaining in the full implementation of the Resolution 1325 and ultimately identify new pathways for UNESCO to contribute to the women, peace and security agenda.

V. Breaking Gender Stereotypes: Challenging the Status Quo

Gender stereotypes have the capacity to limit the freedom of women and men, girls and boys; insofar as they affect their most profound and intimate perception of themselves and of their capacities and aspirations. Gender stereotypes are a limit to human potential and wellbeing because they condition the vision that women and men, girls and boys, have of what they can or should be and achieve. Gender categorization and portrayals may be subtle and difficult to tackle, and yet they often represent a greater obstacle than laws and norms in preventing equality among women and men. Thus, gender stereotypes prevent sustainable development, and their negative effects can be witnessed in all spheres of life and at all levels, from local communities to the international arena.

This panel gathers a unique set of leaders, intellectuals and activists who are dedicating their lives to changing mind-sets with a view to building inclusive societies. During this session, UNESCO seeks to discuss how the stereotypical portrayal of women and men has specifically been a barrier for change and to learn about innovative approaches and experiences for the promotion of non-stereotypical images of women and men. The speakers of the panel will be asked to share their stories and present their work for the deconstruction of gender stereotypes from different angles. They will address issues such as the analysis of masculinities and positive fatherhood, the importance of media to promote freedom of speech, the critical role for women in politics, and the interlinkages between media and restrictive gender roles.

VI. Leadership and Power: Women in business

The business world is a core area for leadership and the panel aims at identifying new pathways for the promotion of women's leadership in business worldwide, building on UNESCO's work in the field of women's economic empowerment and through the experience and vision of the distinguished speakers of this panel.

LIST OF SPEAKERS

Not necessarily in order of speaking

Opening – Closing

Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

Mr Mohamed Hmayen Bouamatou, Conference Sponsor, Founder & President, Fondation pour l'égalité des chances en Afrique

H.E. Ms Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of the Republic of Malta

H.E. Ms Tarja Halonen, Former President of the Republic of Finland

H.E. Ms Teresa Fernández de la Vega, Former First Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain, President, Fundación Mujeres por África

H.E. Dr Amal Abdullah Al Qubaisi, President, Federal National Council, United Arab Emirates

H.R.H. Princess Dana Firas, President, Petra National Trust

H.R.H. Princess Petra Laurentien of the Netherlands, Princess of Orange-Nassau, UNESCO Special Envoy for Literacy for Development

Ms Gabriela Ramos, Chief of Staff and Sherpa to the G20, OECD

Ms Rula Ghani, First Lady of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Parallel Sessions – Keynote Speakers

The Rt. Hon. Adrienne Clarkson, Former Governor-General of Canada

Ambassador Melanne Vermeer, Executive Director, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

Baroness Beeban Kidron, OBE, Member of the House of Lords, Gender Equality Advocate

Prof. Michael Kimmel, SUNY Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies
Executive Director, Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities, Department of Sociology
Stony Brook University, United States of America

Ms Marie-Christine Saragosse, President, Director General, France Médias Monde

Parallel Sessions - Panelists

Ms Fatimetou Abdel Malick, Mayor of the community of Tevragh-Zeina, Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Prof. Feride Acar, Professor, Ankara Middle East Technical University, CEDAW Member

Ms Hoda Al-Helaissi, The Shura Council, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Ms Amal Al Koos, National Commission for UNESCO, United Arab Emirates

Ms Aïcha Bah Diallo, Founder, Forum for African Women Educationalists

Ms Lalla-Aïcha Ben Barka, Former Assistant Director-General for Africa, UNESCO

Ms Eva Biaudet, Member of Parliament, Republic of Finland

Ms Sandra Cornet-Vernet Lehongre, Director for Social and Societal Responsibility, NOKIA, Republic of France

Professor Dr Rangita de Silva de Alwis, Associate Dean of International Affairs, University of Pennsylvania Law School

Ms Elisabeth Decrey-Warner, President and Co-Founder, Geneva Call

Ms Anita Erskine, Entrepreneur

Ms Meagan Fallone, Chief Executive Officer, Barefoot College

Ms Miriam González-Durántez, Founder, Inspiring Girls International

Ms Bonnie Hagemann, Chief Executive Officer, Executive Development Associates

Dr Maliha Hashimi, Executive Director, Red Sea Foundation

Ms Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir, Chair of the Women Political Leaders Global Forum Executive Board, Former Minister of Interior of the Republic of Iceland, Member of Parliament of the Republic of Iceland, and Mayor of Reykjavík

Ms Cécile Kyenge Kashetu, Former Italian Minister for Integration, Member of the European Parliament

Ms Isabella Lenarduzzi, Founder and Director, JUMP

Dr Ing. Boriana Manolova, Chairperson, Council of Women in Business in Bulgaria

Ms Aminetou Mint el Moctar, President, Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille

Ambassador Carmen Moreno, Executive Secretary, Inter-American Commission

Ms Jacqueline Moudeina, Laureate of the Right Livelihood Award

Ms Evernice Munando, Director of the Female Students Network Trust

Ms Irene Natividad, President, Global Summit of Women

Ms Zuriel Oduwole, Independent Filmmaker

Ms Shazia Rafi, UN Representative for the All Pakistan Women's Association, Managing Director, Global Parliamentary Services

Ms Mazal Renford, Adviser for International Cooperation and Peace, International Council of Women

Ms Tarcila Rivera Zea, Chirapaq: Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú

Ms Michäella Rugwizangoga, Co-Founder, International Hope Week

H.E. Dr Habiba Sarabi, Deputy Chairperson of Afghan High Peace Council & Adviser to Afghan CEOs on Women and Youth Affairs

Ms Marlène Schiappa, Secretary of State for Equality between Women and Men, Republic of France

Ms Lydia Shouleva, Former Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria

Dr Hayat Sindi, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador