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STATEMENT by
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Access and Participation of Women in Education and
Science in the Republic of Croatia

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fifth Session

Priority Theme:
**Access and participation of women and girls to
education, training, science and technology, including
for the promotion of women's equal access to full
employment and decent work**

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Mr. Chairman (Chairperson), distinguished delegates and participants,

It is my great pleasure to address the Commission on the Status of Women, and to contribute to the priority theme Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.

The Republic of Croatia strongly supports the role of the UN and the efforts it invests in many countries worldwide, to improve education and eliminate illiteracy as part of fundamental women's human rights, as well as one of the most important Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to take this opportunity to share with you some facts and figures on the situation in this area pertaining to the Republic of Croatia.

I am proud of the fact that, no gender gap in access to education has been recorded: male and female students are equally represented at all levels of education. However, women do prevail in the total number of students who enrol in universities (with 55%), as well as in the total number of students who graduate (with 58%). It is important to add here that 52% of doctorates of science degrees (PhD) are held by women.

This increasing trend of highly educated women has been continuous for the last forty years. If this development continues, we can expect significant changes in the labor market – for the benefit of women.

Nevertheless, the choice of occupation for many women in Croatia is still influenced by traditional gender roles. For instance, among university graduates, women are still underrepresented in the field of computer sciences (16,2%) and engineering (20,4%), although data shows a slow, but growing trend in this area. However, by way of contrast, women make up 73% of all mathematics and statistics graduates.

It is important to note here recent research which shows that approximately 80% of Croatian citizens support the equal right of both genders to education.

On the basis of these facts, national strategic priorities in the educational sector comprise the introduction of gender-sensitive education at all levels, including the removal of gender stereotyping, systematic gender equality training for teaching staff, and public awareness campaigns. These priorities are an integral part of the *National*

Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality, MDGs national indicators, and are clearly regulated under Croatia's Gender Equality Act.

Recently introduced measures aiming at reaching national priority objectives in this area included amongst other things, a new *Textbook Standard* which prescribes the removal of stereotypes from school textbooks, gender equality in teacher training programme, and initiatives to include gender equality into the human rights education curriculum.

Distinguished participants, in addition, I would like to point out that with 50% women employed in the research and development sector, Croatia has reached gender parity and made significant progress. The fastest growth of female participation in the research sector has occurred in the business sector where they now account for 44%. In the government research sector - women prevail, representing 52%.

Turning to higher education, with 44% of the total number of academic staff being women, in Croatia we have nearly reached equal representation. However female representation at the full professor rank is lower and increases from the rank of lecturers and assistants where women make up 53%. However, in higher education institutions only 14% of women hold rector, and 17% dean positions. Despite this, the number of women holding leading positions in public research institutes is notably better, where 40% of directors are women.

In conclusion, allow me to highlight that our goal and priority in the area of science, research and development is to further stimulate girls to engage from early schooling in the so called "male area of interest" and continue by studying in the technical fields such as engineering and information technology. We believe that this is the necessary path to pursue in order to open up their opportunities in a world led by new technologies and highly skilled labor market.

Thank you very much for your attention.