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STEM Women Congress Creating opportunities through STEM

STEM WOMEN ASSOCIATION

HLSF BARCELONA 2026

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT RESOLUTION

Advancing Women and Girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

From Equal Opportunities to Equal Participation, Leadership and Impact

Barcelona, 9 November 2026

HLSF Barcelona 2026

Proposed international resolution for collective endorsement and continued action.

PREAMBLE

Recognizing the challenge and committing to change

We, the participants, representatives, policymakers, educators, industry leaders, researchers, students and advocates gathered at HLSF Barcelona 2026, recognize that gender equality in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is not mere a matter of fairness. It is an essential condition for social progress, economic development, scientific excellence, democratic participation and a sustainable future.

Across Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Mexico, Canada and countries across Africa, important progress has been made. Legislation has been introduced, educational opportunities have expanded, diversity strategies have been developed, and women have increasingly become visible as researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs, scientists and leaders. Yet progress remains uneven.

Women continue to be underrepresented in engineering, information and communication technologies, artificial intelligence, digital innovation and senior technology leadership. Girls continue to face barriers when choosing STEM subjects, and women who enter STEM careers are not always able to progress, remain or reach positions of influence.

The discussions at HLSF Barcelona 2026 highlight an important reality: equality cannot be achieved through access alone. It requires structural change throughout the entire journey, from childhood education to professional leadership.

We recognize that the barriers are interconnected:

- **Education:** Gender stereotypes, limited exposure to practical STEM experiences and a lack of relatable role models can influence girls' decisions long before they choose a university degree.
- **Family and society:** Expectations about gender roles, care responsibilities, confidence and belonging continue to shape educational and professional choices.
- **Economic inequality:** Poverty, geography, limited connectivity and unequal access to equipment, mentoring and educational opportunities disproportionately affect girls from disadvantaged communities.
- **The workplace:** Recruitment bias, unequal pay, limited promotion opportunities, workplace cultures and inadequate support for work-life balance can push women out of STEM careers.
- **Leadership and representation:** Women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions, despite their contributions to research, innovation and economic development.

- **Institutional accountability:** Policies and diversity programmes cannot deliver lasting change without measurable targets, transparent reporting and responsibility for results.

We further recognize that gender inequality does not affect all women equally. Race, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic circumstances, migration, geographical location and access to digital infrastructure can compound existing disadvantages.

The experiences shared across the participating countries demonstrate that there is no single solution. However, common principles must guide collective action.

We believe that:

1. Every girl should have the opportunity to discover, explore and pursue STEM without discrimination or limiting stereotypes.
2. Every woman entering a STEM pathway should have a fair opportunity to remain, progress and lead.
3. Governments, educational institutions, businesses and civil society must share responsibility for achieving gender equality.
4. Diversity must be reflected not only in participation but also in influence, recognition, funding, decision-making and innovation.

We therefore adopt this declaration as a call for coordinated international action, moving beyond awareness and isolated initiatives towards measurable and sustainable transformation.

THE CHALLENGE

The international perspectives presented at HLSF Barcelona 2026 reveal that the gender gap in STEM is not created at one particular moment. It develops through a series of interconnected decisions, opportunities and barriers.

- **Education must create opportunity, not simply provide access**

The experiences of Spain and Denmark demonstrate that legislation, gender-equality strategies and broader social equality do not automatically translate into equal participation in STEM.

Girls need more than encouragement to study science and technology. They need early exposure, practical experiences, supportive teachers, confidence-building opportunities and visible examples of women working across different STEM disciplines.

Schools and educational institutions must challenge stereotypes rather than unintentionally reproduce them.

- **Research participation must translate into technological leadership**

Portugal's experience highlights the distinction between women's participation in research and their representation in technology careers and leadership.

Increasing the number of women in scientific research is important, but it cannot be considered the final measure of success.

Women must also have opportunities to commercialize research, participate in innovation, establish technology companies, access investment and occupy senior decision-making positions.

- **Inclusion must address economic and geographical inequality**

The perspectives from Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and across Africa highlight the importance of recognising that not every girl starts from the same position.

For girls living in rural communities, low-income neighbourhoods or areas with limited digital infrastructure, general diversity programmes may not be enough.

Access to reliable internet, devices, transportation, scholarships, mentoring and local educational opportunities can determine whether talent is ever discovered.

STEM inclusion must therefore be designed around the realities of different communities.

- **The pipeline must become a sustainable pathway**

The experiences raised by Mexico and Canada reinforce the need to examine what happens after women enter STEM education and employment. Recruitment figures alone cannot demonstrate equality.

Institutions and employers must examine who graduates, who obtains their first job, who remains in the sector, who gets promoted, who receives funding and who eventually reaches leadership positions.

Retention is as important as recruitment.

5. STEM must recognise all scientific contributions

The discussion surrounding nursing and health professions raises an important question about how society defines and values STEM.

Scientific knowledge, technological innovation, healthcare, engineering and research are interconnected.

Women-dominated scientific and technical professions must not be overlooked simply because their contributions have historically been associated with care.

Recognition, professional status, research investment and leadership opportunities must reflect the scientific value of these disciplines.

6. Equality must become a shared responsibility

Technology companies, universities, professional associations, governments, municipalities, event organisers and individual professionals all influence the opportunities available to women.

Men must become active participants in achieving equality, not simply supporters standing outside the discussion.

Representation on stages, in leadership teams, in recruitment processes and in decision-making structures sends a powerful message about who belongs.

The responsibility for change must be collective.

ACTION 1: Build an inclusive STEM journey from childhood to employment

Commitment: Make STEM accessible, attractive and achievable for every girl, regardless of her background or geographical location.

We call upon national and regional governments, educational institutions, schools, universities and community organizations to strengthen the entire educational pathway into STEM.

We recommend the following actions:

A. Introduce early and sustained STEM exposure.

- Integrate practical science, engineering, digital literacy, coding and problem-solving experiences into early education.
- Create opportunities for girls to participate in laboratories, technology workshops, robotics projects and innovation challenges.
- Ensure that STEM activities are inclusive, accessible and designed to encourage participation rather than reinforce existing stereotypes.

B. Make female role models visible and accessible.

- Establish national and international mentoring networks connecting girls with women working in STEM.
- Introduce regular school visits, professional exchanges, career talks and workplace experiences.
- Promote women from different backgrounds and disciplines, including engineers, researchers, nurses, entrepreneurs, data scientists and technology leaders.

C. Remove geographical and economic barriers.

- Expand access to devices, connectivity, digital learning resources and technical equipment.
- Develop scholarships, transport assistance and community-based STEM programmes.
- Prioritise rural areas, underserved neighbourhoods and communities facing socioeconomic disadvantages.
- Support partnerships between schools, local authorities, universities and private companies.

D. Prepare educators to challenge stereotypes.

- Provide teacher training on gender-inclusive STEM education.
- Review educational materials to ensure balanced representation.

- Encourage teaching approaches that build confidence, curiosity and practical problem-solving skills.

ACTION 2: Retain, recognize and promote women throughout STEM careers

Commitment: Move beyond recruitment targets and create working environments in which women can build sustainable, rewarding and influential careers.

We call upon employers, universities, research institutions, professional associations and industry leaders to take responsibility for the retention and advancement of women in STEM.

We recommend the following actions:

A. Measure the entire career pathway.

- Collect and publish gender-disaggregated data on recruitment, retention, pay, promotion, research funding and leadership.
- Identify the stages where women disproportionately leave STEM education and employment.
- Evaluate diversity initiatives according to measurable results rather than participation figures alone.

B. Make workplaces fairer and more inclusive.

- Review recruitment and promotion procedures to identify structural and unconscious bias.
- Establish transparent salary and promotion criteria.
- Introduce effective policies addressing harassment, discrimination and exclusion.
- Develop flexible working arrangements and equitable parental and caregiving policies.

C. Strengthen mentoring and leadership development.

- Establish structured mentoring and sponsorship programmes for women at different career stages.
- Create opportunities for women to lead research projects, technical teams and innovation programmes.
- Increase women's representation on boards, executive teams, scientific committees and decision-making bodies.

D. Recognize the full spectrum of STEM professions.

- Promote the scientific and technological contribution of healthcare professionals, including nursing.
- Strengthen recognition of women working in applied science, technical professions, research and interdisciplinary innovation.

- Ensure that professional recognition and leadership opportunities are not limited to traditionally male-dominated STEM disciplines.

E. Scale effective industry practices.

- Encourage companies to share evidence of successful recruitment, retention and promotion initiatives.
- Develop partnerships between companies and educational institutions.
- Evaluate initiatives based on their sustained impact and adapt them to different national and organizational contexts.

ACTION 3: Make institutions accountable and transform the culture of STEM

Commitment: Ensure that gender equality is embedded in institutional decisions, public policies, investment priorities and the culture of the STEM ecosystem.

We call upon governments, the European Union, international organizations, municipalities, universities, industry representatives and professional associations to move from voluntary commitments towards transparent accountability.

We recommend the following actions:

A. Establish measurable national and institutional objectives.

- Define clear gender-equality objectives for STEM education, employment, research and leadership.
- Publish annual progress reports.
- Establish indicators that measure both participation and long-term career outcomes.
- Identify responsibility for delivering each objective.

B. Strengthen international cooperation.

- Encourage countries to exchange successful policies and evidence-based practices.
- Develop international partnerships between STEM organizations, universities, businesses and governments.
- Share lessons from different national experiences while recognizing that policies must be adapted to local contexts.
- Build cooperation between Europe, Latin America, North America and Africa.

C. Make public and private investment more inclusive.

- Encourage funding programmes that address barriers faced by underrepresented women.
- Improve women's access to research funding, entrepreneurship support, venture capital and innovation opportunities.
- Evaluate whether public investment benefits women equally across different STEM disciplines and career stages.

D. Transform representation in public spaces and decision-making.

- Encourage balanced representation at technology conferences, scientific events and industry forums.
- Promote women as keynote speakers, moderators, experts and decision-makers.

- Establish diversity objectives for events and monitor their implementation.
- Challenge the normalization of all-male panels and leadership structures.

E. Make men and institutions active partners.

- Encourage male professionals to mentor, sponsor and advocate for women.
- Promote shared responsibility for caregiving and inclusive workplace practices.
- Address discriminatory behaviours and organizational cultures.
- Ensure that gender equality is treated as a collective responsibility rather than an issue delegated exclusively to women.

ACTION 4: Empower the next generation to lead the transformation

Commitment: Give young people the opportunities, networks, resources and decision-making power to shape the future of STEM.

We recognize that young people must not simply be considered the beneficiaries of gender-equality policies. They must be recognized as active contributors, innovators, decision-makers and leaders.

The next generation will inherit the scientific, technological and social consequences of the decisions being made today. They must therefore have a meaningful role in shaping those decisions.

We recommend the following actions:

A. Establish international youth collaboration networks.

- Connect young women and men studying or working in STEM across countries and continents.
- Develop exchange programmes, international mentoring networks and collaborative innovation projects.
- Encourage cooperation between schools, universities, STEM associations and industry.
- Create opportunities for young people to share experiences and solutions across different cultural and economic contexts.

B. Give young people a voice in policymaking.

- Establish youth advisory groups within STEM organizations and relevant public institutions.
- Include young professionals and students in conferences, consultations and policy discussions.
- Ensure that young people from disadvantaged and underrepresented communities are included.
- Move beyond symbolic participation by giving young representatives meaningful responsibilities.

C. Support youth-led innovation and entrepreneurship.

- Expand access to innovation competitions, startup programmes, research opportunities and technical training.

- Encourage young women to develop solutions to real-world challenges in technology, healthcare, sustainability and engineering.
- Connect emerging talent with mentors, investors, research institutions and industry partners.

D. Build a continuing international movement.

- Use HLSF Barcelona 2026 as a platform for sustained international collaboration.
- Encourage participating countries and organizations to develop follow-up initiatives and report on their progress.
- Build momentum towards future international gatherings, including the journey towards New York 2028.
- Ensure that the next generation is actively involved in defining the priorities and ambitions of this movement.

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We, the participants of HLSF Barcelona 2026, recognize that the future of science, technology, engineering and mathematics cannot be built by leaving half of the world's talent behind.

We recognize the progress achieved by countries, institutions, organizations and individuals. We also acknowledge that progress must be measured not by the number of policies announced or programmes established, but by the opportunities created and the barriers removed.

We therefore commit to working together across borders, sectors, generations and disciplines to:

1. Build inclusive STEM pathways from childhood through education and into employment.
2. Retain, recognize and promote women throughout their STEM careers.
3. Make governments, institutions and industry accountable for measurable progress.
4. Empower the next generation to become active participants and leaders in shaping the future.