



## Economic and Social Council

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### Statement submitted by Shanta Memorial Rehabilitation Centre, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



## **Statement**

The exclusion of women with disabilities from the global development agenda has been recognized at many forums, as well as by the United Nations (see General Assembly resolution 65/186, entitled “Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond”).

Globally, the fields of science and technology are growing at a dramatic pace and provide a new sphere of development, creating a higher quality of life and independence. Unfortunately, 15 per cent of the global disabled population, of which at least 60 per cent are women, the majority of whom live in rural areas, are completely excluded.

For women, gender-based stereotyping contributes to their exclusion. Low literacy, lower income and rare control of resources make women with disabilities disadvantaged in the field of education and employment. A continuous violence perpetuated against them contributes to their powerlessness. It is therefore being slowly recognized that there is an urgent need to include women and girls with disabilities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics to empower them by enhancing their educational and employment opportunities.

Coming from a developing country with large resources, the Women with Disabilities India Network is concerned about the gender gap that exists across a wide range of socioeconomic indicators, but specifically in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, which affects our well-being.

The reason for women with disabilities’ lack of access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics is multilayered. The educational levels of women with disabilities are so low that these women are unable to contribute to scientific areas such as biotechnology, the chemical and engineering industries, aerospace etc. that contribute to their quality of life. Reproductive health issues linked to the usage of the latest nano-bio-info-cogno-synbio technology and the marketing of next-generation fertility technologies without women’s consent make wombs testing grounds. With little information and no ethical guidelines, women’s bodies are used without their will.

## **Science, technology, engineering and mathematics and the Millennium Development Goals**

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics add value to women’s existing knowledge and contribute to an equal utilization of the world’s resources. For instance, women with disabilities have problems of food security but at the same time are producers. Knowledge gained through science, technology, engineering and mathematics would contribute to increased national food productivity and economic growth. The usage of chemical fertilizer in food production damages the climate. Women can protect the climate by using appropriate, innovative and sustainable technology.

By accessing science, technology, engineering and mathematics, women with disabilities can contribute to the workforce by their inclusion in the State’s scientific community and their incorporation in the rural sectors. The former would promote research and the latter implementation in the field. Such participation would enable

the positive utilization of resources and the creation of a workforce of women scientists empowered to challenge their use as guinea pigs by drug companies who force them to become involved in unsafe trials.

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals requires the support of the United Nations system, in this case specifically of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, with regard to research and creating awareness through the usage of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

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