

ATUMUN 2020

United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization



ATUMUN

Position Papers

Equal Access to Education

Introduction

Dear Delegates,

The following documents are a collection of position papers for the countries represented in our ATUMUN conference on the topic of *Equal Access to Education*. We expect you to have read the Study Guide beforehand and hope that you've had the time to research by yourself as well. It is of great importance that you read the Position paper for your respective country before the session begins, as this will serve as the very basis of the negotiations.

When reading your Position Paper, it is important to note the central view that your country represents. We highly recommend you complementing your Position Paper with your own research. The Position Papers are kept short, in order for you to make your own conclusions as well as the position that the paper reveals.

In order for you to be able to have a fruitful debate, we highly recommend that you read other countries Position Papers as well. By doing so, you will get a better understanding of the topic, and the different perspectives that the countries represent.

At last, we would like to thank our fellow co-writers, Kresten Knøsgaard, Julie Skogstad Blaabjerg, Hekmatullah Akbari, Laurits Rasmussen, Anna Møller Yang and Simon Thomsen, for taking their time to help us with writing these Position Papers. If you have any questions, we would like to remind you that our inbox is open, and if you need any help with your research, we would like to refer to *Questions a resolution should answer*, *Further reading*, *Bloc positions* and *Background* in the Study Guide.

Sincerely from your Committee Directors,

Line Møller Jørgensen & Julie Blom

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The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has had a recent history of not educating women. Under the rule of the Taliban from 1996-2001, almost all education for girls and women were prohibited. Afghanistan has been a part of the United Nations and UNESCO since 1946, and the government signed CEDAW in 1980. However, the country has trouble living up to this agreement. In 2014, Afghanistan revised its Constitution so that gender equality is more clearly defined by law.

Afghanistan is a traditional country and values traditional gender roles. They do not prioritise women's education, but rather the teaching of being a good housewife. This priority leads to many adolescent pregnancies and young marriages, but since this does not conflict with Afghanistan's general perspective on women, the government does not see this as a problem.

Afghanistan has launched the world's largest literacy intervention with support from UNESCO and financial assistance from the Government of Japan. The programme called Enhancement of Literacy Afghanistan is aiming to improve the level of literacy, numeracy and vocational skills of the adult population in Afghanistan, and has enabled graduation of 600,000 (60% female) youth and adults.

Afghanistan calls for developed countries to assist in funding and running such programs to improve global literacy. Afghanistan finds it important, however, that such education for girls will also focus on skills necessary for them to support a family, and that the program is non-gender based, in order to ensure more education for all, and not just women.

The Argentine Republic

The Argentine Republic prioritises education and equal education. They have been a part of the UN and UNESCO since 1945, and have ratified both CADE and CEDAW. In Argentina, most education is free, including undergraduate university level. Not all children are attending school, but this is determined by socioeconomic circumstances rather than gender. In poorer regions, many girls are forced to leave school because they have to do domestic work and be in charge of the household. This is partly due to gender stereotypes that women should prioritise their families over their education and job. Argentina has launched campaigns in order to change this very common belief, but it is a slow process. To Argentina, this is the most pressing issue for the committee to address.

In Argentina, women have higher literacy rates and higher enrolment rates in secondary school than men. The country has passed regulations to combat gender-based violence and to ensure comprehensive sexual education. Sexual education has been an important tool in lowering early pregnancies, which is a major cause of girls leaving school. Argentina finds it important that other countries implement similar policies and urges UNESCO to support this effort.

Finally, Argentina believes UNESCO should continue to closely monitor the equality in access to education and collect data that might unveil underlying factors causing inequality.

People's Republic of Bangladesh

When the People's Republic of Bangladesh gained its independence, equal rights for men and women was written into its constitution. The Bangladeshi constitution, amongst other things, not only guarantees women equal opportunities in "in all spheres of national life" but also reserves a number of seats in the parliament for women. Compared to that of its neighbours, Bangladeshi legislation is therefore relatively equal.

However, men and women are, despite laws, still treated very differently. Many laws protecting women's rights are simply ignored by the populace without consequences. An example of this is child marriage, as it remains an integral part of Bangladeshi society though it is outlawed. According to statistics, 29 % of girls Bangladeshi girls are married before the age of 15, and 65 % are married before 18. This discrimination also carries into education. Dropout percentage for girls in Bangladesh at the secondary level is as high as 42 % according to statistics, and only 10 % of girls complete secondary education. Despite this, Bangladesh still ranks number one in equality among its South Asian neighbours.

The People's Republic of Bangladesh is a member of CADE, and in large parts recognizes the importance of giving equal access to education. The People's Republic of Bangladesh is keen on giving women better education, but a major shift in culture is required to achieve this.

Republic of Burkina Faso (FÆRDIG)

In 2018, the literacy rate in the Republic of Burkina Faso - hereon referred to as Burkina Faso - was 41.2% for adults over the age of 15 years. However, the adult literacy rate has improved, because in 1996 the literacy rate in Burkina Faso was at 12.8%, meaning that the literacy rate has grown with 28.4 percentage points in 22 years. Though, in an international range, Burkina Faso still has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world and a school enrollment rate at only 39.1%.

All things considered, gender equality in education in Burkina Faso is still quite significant. In 2005, only 8.1% of women aged above 15 were literate, compared to 18.5% of men. Generally, this means that the gender disparities in education range boys over girls. There are several factors keeping girls from enrolling in school - such as mothers not wanting to forgo the help of their daughters in domestic tasks and taking care of younger siblings, child marriage of girls, shortage of schools and a general lack of schools outside urban centres, and poverty leading parents to prioritise educating boys over girls since the boys would stay in the family and girls would be married off.

An NGO - Aide et Action - has been active in Burkina Faso since 2001 and has been aiming to promote economic and social empowerment of women, increase the number of literate women by at least 50%, help improve their income through the establishment of income-generating activities, and strengthen their organisational capacities for the empowerment and sustainability of literacy centres.

The 4th of September 2012, Burkina Faso ratified CADE. This means Burkina Faso has committed themselves to be legally bound by CADE - thus meaning that they not only endorse it but that it is part of their national legislation. The 14th of October 1987, Burkina Faso ratified CEDAW.

The Republic of Chile

The Republic of Chile - hereon referred to as Chile - has been working hard on improving Chilean education since the demise of the Pinochet dictatorship, and in terms of gender equality in education, the enrollment rates are higher for women than men in both secondary and tertiary education in Chile. However, Chile's most pressing issue at the moment is not gender equality in education, but the large economic gender gap that they have been making quite slow progress at closing. It has been stated that there is a significant untapped potential for women in the workforce and that higher participation rates and equal pay could not only improve economic well-being but also improve the Chilean GDP. The country's annual GDP would increase by 10,5% if women's participation in the workforce equalled that of men.

This means that both international data and the Chilean banking figures have questioned what is happening once women enter the labour force since the educational gender gap has significantly decreased - thus meaning that the Chileans are trying to figure out what factors are affecting the Chilean women trying to join the workforce - and what the policy-makers can do to address these issues.

The 26th of October 1971, Chile ratified CADE. This means Chile has committed themselves to be legally bound by CADE - thus meaning that they not only endorse it but that it is part of their national legislation. On the 7th of December 1989, Chile ratified CEDAW. However, it was not until the 3rd of December 2019 - 20 years later - that the Chilean Senate approved the Optional Protocol for CEDAW (OP-CEDAW). The OP-CEDAW establishes complaint and inquiry mechanisms for CEDAW. This allows Chilean women to go to the UN with complaints about grave or systematic violations of CEDAW in Chile.

The People's Republic of China

In The People's Republic of China - hereon referred to as China - gender parity has been a crucial issue for decades - for example, under the Deng Xiaoping government in the 1990s, the market reforms created a capitalist market that quickly increased inequality, resulting in a widening gender wage gap in the 1990s.

However, China has made some progress on the issue over the years - though there is now a strong urban-rural divide. In 2009, 50.48% of students enrolled at university were female - this marking the first year that women outnumbered men. Moreover, between 1990 and 2017, the average number of years Chinese females spent in school leaps from 4.8 to 7.6 years.

Yet, women living in China's rural areas are still facing significant barriers in education and other spheres - simply due to the traditional values and familial expectations for women in China. To be specific, the meta-regression analysis from 2012 made by the Rural Education Action Project about gender inequality in China found that whilst gender inequality in the Chinese education system has declined in urban areas in the past three decades, it still dominates in rural areas. At last, while 96.1% of rural female students are enrolled in primary education, only 79.3% move onto secondary education.

In 1980 China ratified CEDAW. This means China has committed themselves to be legally bound by CEDAW - thus meaning that they not only endorse it but that it is part of their national legislation. China has neither signed nor ratified CADE.

As a final note, China is a developing country, hampered by its level of economic and social development as well as by traditional attitudes. In real life, Chinese women's equal rights to political participation, employment and education as well as in marriage and family life have yet to be fully realized. Disrespect for and discrimination against women, and even violations of their rights and interests, are not uncommon.

The Dominican Republic

Girls' education in the Dominican Republic is faced with many challenges - as an example, the Dominican Republic has one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancies in Latin America. For every 1000 pregnancies in the Dominican Republic, statistically 90 of those are by teenage girls - this means that 25% of female teens in the Dominican Republic are likely to become pregnant - regionally only overtaken by Nicaragua at 28% and Honduras at 26%.

These teen pregnancies are compromising education and lead to higher rates of dropping out of school, creating a vicious cycle of poverty, since a girl dropping out of school cannot provide for her child, and cannot get well-paying jobs in the future because she doesn't have an education, and because of the significant wage gap between men and women in the Dominican Republic. This means that women do not have equal access to work, and are furthermore not treated with equality in the workplace, and women are twice as likely to be unemployed than men in the Dominican Republic. So, even though enrollment rates in primary education are relatively high for both women and men, many females never graduate from college or any other types of higher education, and thus never get to have equal access to work. However, many of the organisations active in the Dominican Republic recognise the complex issue of adolescent pregnancies and are taking steps to help empower women through education, vocational training and proper medical care and treatment for their children.

However, the Dominican government is aware of the problem and is deeply committed to promoting equality within the Dominican Republic. The 30th of August 1977, the Dominican Republic ratified CADE. This means the Dominican Republic has committed themselves to be legally bound by CADE - thus meaning that they not only endorse it but that it is part of their national legislation. In 1982, the Dominican Republic ratified CEDAW, and in 2001 they ratified the Optional Protocol for CEDAW (OP-CEDAW).

Arab Republic of Egypt

The Arab Republic of Egypt - hereon referred to as Egypt - rank low on gender equality compared to other countries worldwide. Generally, women have significantly lower participation in the labour force than men, with 26% of the Egyptian women participating in the labour force against the 79% of Egyptian men participating in the labour force. However, the Egyptian government acknowledges that empowering women and integrating them as active participants in the economy is essential to promoting economic growth in Egypt - and according to the IMF, raising the female labour force participation rate to the male level would increase GDP by approximately 34%.

The government of Egypt has shown more interest in the education system in the past few years and has been working to improve said system - especially for women and girls. Whilst trying to improve the education system, significantly more government funding has been used over the past decades to increase the accessibility of girl's education in Egypt. This means that over the past 20 years, girls' enrollment in school has risen greatly and according to Egypt Demographic and Health Surveys, as of 2014, 92% of girls living in urban areas were attending primary school and 71% of girls were attending secondary school - with these rates being very similar to the percentage of boys enrolled in the same age groups. However, Egypt's most pressing issue is getting the girls to stay in school, which is why the Egyptian government is trying to pique girls' interest in the STEM fields so that they can join the workforce when they grow up.

The 28th of March 1962 Egypt accepted CADE. This means that Egypt has not committed itself to be legally bound by Cade. However, the 16th of July 1980, Egypt signed CEDAW, and the 18th of September 1981, Egypt ratified CEDAW, meaning Egypt has committed themselves to be legally bound by CEDAW - thus meaning that they not only endorse it but that it is part of its national legislation.

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

According to UNESCO, The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia - hereon referred to as Ethiopia - only have 31% of the total adolescent population enrolled in secondary education in 2015, and only 47% of females aged 15-24 years old are literate, compared to 63% of males the same age. However, the nation does have one of the highest primary school enrollment rates in Africa, with the percentage of girls enrollment in primary schools in 2015 was around 60%, which is a significant increase from the 19% of girls who enrolled in the same education level in 1990. Though, knowing this information it also becomes evident that one of Ethiopia's greatest problems is to get the girls to stay in school, with some of the reasons girls drop out of school being early marriage and pregnancy, especially in the rural areas of Ethiopia this proves to be a problem. Unable to finish school, pregnant girls in rural areas deal with poverty, inequality or discrimination, lack of education and facilities. In 2013, 57.7% of girls were marrying before the legal age of 18, and a survey taken in 2015 showed that 3.7% of girls aged 15-19 in rural areas were pregnant, compared to 0.6% of girls in urban areas. When looking at the entirety of Ethiopia, more problems surface. Many girls in the region face challenges of gender inequality that exclude them from school. Extreme household poverty, walking distance to school, inadequate school resources, lack of sanitation facilities, child labour, marriage and female circumcision are amongst obstacles that prevent girls from education in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia has neither signed nor ratified CADE, but the 8th of July 1980 they signed CEDAW, and the 10th of September 1981 they ratified it, meaning Ethiopia has committed themselves to be legally bound by CEDAW - thus meaning that they not only endorse it but that it is part of their national legislation.

The French Republic

The French Republic is a firm believer in equality for men and women in the field of education. The French Republic is a member of both CADE and CEDAW and actively supports the fight for equality worldwide. It is involved in programs in international programs on both European and international scale, that aim to promote education for women, but also to empower women in their everyday lives. Examples of French commitment internationally are the “Women for the future in the Mediterranean” and “Gender, Generation and Social Cohesion” PSFs (Priority Solidarity Fund). These funds aim to empower women in North Africa and the Middle East, with the goal of increasing the number of women in government and improving women’s employability respectively.

Within its own borders the French Republic’s ‘French Code of Education’ guarantees equal access to education for both men and women alike. Furthermore, the French Republic implemented a number of laws in the 2000s that sought to measure and diminish inequalities faced by women in the fields of science and education, and to promote the natural sciences to girls and young women.

Statistics from 2014 show that 84,2 % of girls and only 70,9 % of boys complete their baccalauréat (a universal exam required by French students in order to graduate high school and continue into higher education). Overall 57 % of students who obtain their baccalauréat are girls, which suggests they face little systematic discrimination. However, girls are still far more likely to choose the fields of humanities over natural sciences and technology.

The French Republic aims to lead by example through inclusion of more women in the higher level of its state administration, and actively including strategies and actions of gender equality in the work of all its 12 ministries.

The Republic of Germany

Germany has both ratified CADE and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and so is reviewed regularly by the Committee on how it is implementing the Convention. Overall, Germany believes that ensuring long-term sustainable development requires the full use of human resources. A study done by McKinsey shows that the overall GDP will increase by 26% if women contribute to the world economy at the rate of men. Therefore, women across the world should no longer be marginalized or devalued. They must be encouraged to reach their full potential and participate in world prosperity on equal terms with men - also in education.

Germany acknowledges that by improving the educational level of women, the female presence in the labour market will increase and help end gender-based biases. Often Germany would focus on equal female representation in secondary education in developing countries and greater female representation in STEM fields in developed countries. For instance, only 28% of young people who enrol in the STEM fields in Germany are female. Therefore, Germany believes that it is crucial to support the access of women in the professional areas of mathematics, informatics, natural sciences and technology. By improving these aspects, other significant aims will automatically be affected. Furthermore, Germany believes that projects should reflect a shared effort of both parliaments, companies and civil society as reaching equality in education is a shared responsibility. As so, equality in education is a great priority for the German government, but in order to reach further equality, there is a need for extending ambitious initiatives.

The Republic of India

The Republic of India is one of the few countries who has not signed the Convention Against Discrimination in Education of 1960. Yet India did ratify the CEDAW document in 1980 and is so determined to improve women's access to education and eliminate gender inequality. Consequently, India recognizes that when women are empowered, the entire society benefits from it. As a result, the Indian government has passed several laws since the 1950s to increase women's opportunities and economic independence.

Yet, while 82% of all Indian men are educated to a certain degree, 85% of Indian women are proven to be illiterate. Overall, more than three million girls in India are not enrolled in school. This deeply ingrown problem is a result of a traditional, male-dominated society with the belief that women should take care of the household instead of getting an education. Furthermore, do girls in India face several other hindering factors, such as patriarchal norms, including gender biases and child marriages. In fact, 47% of all women and girls in India are married before the age of eighteen. In more rural parts of India, many girls are expected to attend the household and take care of their younger siblings, rather than attending school.

However, there are several signs of improvement. In 2009, the Indian parliament passed The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, making education a fundamental right of children aged six to fourteen. As so, India is looking forward to the session and to discuss how women's access to education can be improved all over the world in order to benefit all.

Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a deeply traditional country based on Islamic values and customs. Before the violence of the Iraq war and other similar conflicts, Iran was a quite modernized and to some degree westernized country. It was in fact one of the first countries in the Middle East allowing women to receive higher education and study at university. Yet in recent years there has been a major political regime change and a grave recession in women's access to education. Therefore, Iran did accept the document of CADE in 1968. But on the other hand, Iran is one of the few countries that has not ratified the recent document of CEDAW.

When Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected president in 2005, he introduced several new restrictions on girls' education, such as separate entrances, classrooms and social areas. Furthermore, women were prevented from admissions in 36 universities and 77 majors including accounting and important STEM fields. In Ahmadinejad's presidency from 2005-2013, he promoted a "re-Islamisation" of the Iranian people with an emphasis on reducing Western influence on the culture which in many cases contributed to reducing women's rights and access to education.

Then in 2013, Iran elected Hassan Rouhani as president. Hassan Rouhani is known for his criticism of the gender-based education system in Iran, and he has officially stated that his administration will not discriminate between men and women when it comes to education. Yet many other authorities and significant parts of civil society do not support the forthcoming changes, and so Rouhani's administration has not had big luck in improving women's education in Iran.

Hence the Iranian government is in a quite conflicted position in regards to equal access to education. On one hand, the administration is in favour of a modernization of the educational system with less gender segregation and discrimination. On the other hand, big parts of civil society call for a return to more traditional Islamic values, including gender roles where women are supposed to take care of familial duties and not education.

Kingdom of Morocco

Since Morocco gained independence the government has made great effort and numerous reforms in order to develop the educational system of the country. The right to education has been recognized as a human right under the Millenium development goals (MDGs), but even with financial support from The World Bank, funding reforms in the Moroccan educational system, the Kingdom of Morocco failed to meet the goals for the MDGs. The reforms made were mainly to ensure the development of skills to fit the labour market in preparation for joining the workforce, as this has been the focus of the government regarding quality education.

The gender gap within the educational sector remains one of the key issues for the Moroccan government. Especially the problem regarding the lacking enrollment of women in rural areas, as well as a low percentage of women continuing on to secondary education, seems to be of great importance, with only 26% of rural girls enrolling in secondary education compared to 76% of urban boys.

The Kingdom of Morocco has in recent years been working to promote gender equality within the country and is committed to the works of CEDAW. Along with the recognition of women as having equal rights within society as men, Morocco has implemented a series of laws enhancing women's freedom and legislative rights with regards to marriage and family. These efforts, we believe, are the first steps towards ensuring the opportunity for women to pursue an education. However, the Kingdom of Morocco has not experienced the expected increase in women obtaining higher education. This may be due to traditional cultural norms along with the educational reforms not being funded enough to have serious lasting impacts.

These are some of the challenges the Kingdom of Morocco find to be of high urgency as we continue the work of enhancing equality in education and we look forward to supporting the continued work of UNESCO.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria acknowledges education as a fundamental human right, as described by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Hence, Nigeria has ratified both CADE and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and is fully committed to ensure equal education.

UNICEF has estimated the number of out-of-school girls to be at 65 million with more than 80% of these girls living in Sub-Sahara and one out of four of those living in Nigeria. Basic education is a significant challenge in Nigeria, and only 20% of all Nigerian women are literate and have attended school. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set a 2030 deadline to achieve universal access to primary education for both boys and girls. However, the 2017 Gender in Nigeria Report revealed that Nigeria ranks 118 out of 134 states when it comes to gender equality in education. Therefore, the Nigerian government is determined to work hard to achieve these goals and to improve opportunities and rights for Nigerian girls.

The Nigerian approach mostly focuses on understanding the factors contributing to the current lack of girls' access to education, such as cultural values, traditions and gender biases, not to forget poverty. Especially in rural parts of Sub-Sahara, as in Nigeria, poorer families tend to consider education a luxury they cannot afford. Instead, they pull their daughters out of school to take care of the household and daily chores. Furthermore, they often prioritize boys' education higher, since they believe boys have a better chance of succeeding academically and in society in general. Nevertheless, Nigeria believes that educating girls and women is an important step in overcoming poverty, eliminating gender inequality, not forgetting at least ensuring economic development.

Sixty years after gaining independence, Nigeria can no longer sit back and disregard its developmental strides. Educating girls and women is not only a question of equality and basic human rights - it is also a question of vital economic and societal development.

Republic of the Philippines (FÆRDIG)

The Filipino government is deeply committed to achieving equal access and participation in education for both genders. Therefore, the government is also a strong supporter of the UNESCO initiatives and has both ratified CADE the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Historically, males in the Philippines were to some degree more educated than females. Now, Filipino males are lagging behind females, and the educational gender gap has been widening since the 70s. For instance, 78,5% of all girls complete secondary education compared to only 69,7% of the boys. Therefore, the Filipino approach focuses less on improving opportunities and rights for either gender and it goes beyond the traditional gender stereotypes. Instead it addresses gender biases in education that limits not only girls but also boys in their access to education and furthermore their choosing of education.

The upside of the development since the 70s is that girls has become more educated, yet this eventually led to girls outperforming boys in enrolment and general achievements. The government has found that some of the important factors in the lack of male representation is caused by parents and teachers' low academic expectations of boys, the economic viability of boys and gender biases.

As so, the Philippines aims to eliminate gender biases that hinders boys as well as girls from attending school. Furthermore, the Philippines want to bring attention to the continuing feminization of schooling in order to truly ensure equal education for both girls - and boys.

Romania

Equality in education is a great priority, yet also a grave struggle for the Romanian government. Romania has both ratified CADE and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and is so aiming to reduce inequality in education.

Yet, Romania has great challenges with improving the educational level in general. In 2020, Romania has almost reached its EU national strategy and goals by having 25% of all people aged 30-34 enrolled in tertiary education. There is also still a great gap between male and female participation in tertiary education with 28% men and only 21% women. Furthermore, sub-domain segregation remains an important challenge with significantly few women studying STEM fields and few men studying the humanities. Improving women's participation in STEM fields is particularly difficult in a country with a recent economic crisis, such as Romania, where the pressure to contribute to the household at a young age can fall unequally on girls. Additionally, only 64% of Romanian girls who have previously attended school make the transition to secondary education. This is the most pressing issue on ensuring equal education in Romania, and improving female participation in secondary education will automatically affect other significant aims.

In this way, Romania's approach is based on two key elements. First of all, it is crucial to improve girls' access to secondary education. Secondly, female participation in STEM fields must be further promoted in order to empower women and ensure an education level compared to men. These are the top priorities for Romania in this session and they look forward to creating greater improvements in collaboration with UNESCO.

The Republic of Serbia

The Republic of Serbia finds the issue of equal access to education very important. Serbia is a state party to both CADE and CEDAW. The constitution prohibits all forms of discrimination including in the access to education and the national legislation outlining the educational framework emphasizes the right of every citizen to receive education adapted to their specific needs. Serbia has managed to secure equal enrolment in school for boys and girls, but still around 5 % of children in primary school age do not attend school, primarily children from the Roma minority. Within the Roma minority, the gender gap is larger and girls do not attend or finish school to the same extent as boys. Serbia has launched several initiatives with the help from UNICEF and UN Women to help minorities receive the education they are entitled to.

Early parenthood and marriage have shown to be a clear factor causing women to drop their education at an earlier point.

Serbia calls for developed countries to aid Serbia and countries alike in implementing holistic measures to further increase women's access to education and society in general. Serbia finds it important, however, to remind its fellow UNESCO member states that gender norms are a major factor preventing further improvements in equality and such gender norms are difficult for a government to change.

Serbia hopes for a constructive debate and urges countries to follow Serbia's example and prioritize gender equality in its national budgets.

The Kingdom of Sweden

The Kingdom of Sweden is deeply committed to eliminating all gender inequality in education. In 1842, a school reform first allowed girls to go to school as one of the first countries in the world. Then, in 2016, the government tasked all public-sector universities with producing a plan outlining how to integrate gender equality in their daily activities. Overall, Sweden believes that education is paramount in women's economic empowerment, health and well-being. Additionally, Sweden believes that equality in education strengthens women's political and civil participation and helps prevent gender-based violence and insecurity.

As one of the many member states who has ratified CEDAW, Sweden reports to the UN every fourth year about the progress being made. Furthermore, in 1998, The Swedish CEDAW Network was formed in order to create shadow reports in coordination with more than 20 organizations and the Swedish Women's Lobby. Hence, Sweden seeks to increase opportunities for women to monitor their rights and pursue their demands also through civil society.

Oftenly Sweden's approach on gender equality would focus on equality within research and in STEM fields. Since Sweden is a developed country and one of the most gender-equal countries in the world, women generally have the financial freedom to pursue their academic interests. Nevertheless, women tend to pursue careers in humanities rather than mathematics, engineering etc. This is the known "STEM-field-paradox". For instance, women only make up 34% of all engineering majors in Sweden. One of the barriers the Swedish government has addressed is the gender-based stereotypes regarding fields of study. A Swedish study from 2017 show how norms and structures as early as in childhood teach children that STEM fields are "masculine" and that scientists overall typically are men and not women. However, this is a great working point and the Swedish government is dedicated to promote women's participation in traditionally men-dominated fields.

The Republic of Yemen

Yemen has had success in recent years with improving overall enrollment and completion rates in both primary and secondary education. However, the country has a large gender gap. Yemen is currently affected by a violent internal conflict between different ethnic groups which has caused more than 2 million children to be out of school. Yemen has thus mostly focused on keeping schools open with help from international organisations, that has provided salaries for teachers while the government has not been able. All these programs have been focused on having an equal gender balance, which is even more important during the conflict where families have chosen not to prioritise the education of their girls.

Yemen urges to committee to focus its discussions on the most basic issues hindering Yemen from providing education for girls. First and foremost, the country lacks the necessary facilities. A number of schools have been damaged due to the conflict and others lack proper sanitation. Being a country affected by conflict Yemen doesn't have sufficient funds and thus asks other countries to contribute as much as possible.

Another major issue for the educational sector is a lack of female teachers. Yemen is a society with strong religious and cultural norms and families prefer having their daughters taught by female teachers. With female illiteracy rates around 25 per cent, it is hard to find qualified teachers causing girls to drop out of school.