

222nd Executive Board Session-NGP Committee -3rd October 2025 -BPW International statement - Dr Marie-Claude Machon-Honoré, main representative to UNESCO.

Mr Chair,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Founded after the First World War by a young American lawyer (Lena Madesin Phillips), BPW International was born from her desire to make peace between peoples and initiate an intercultural dialogue. As an NGO ECOSOC member since 1947, represented in all UN agencies, in 120 countries, on 5 continents, BPW International is a partner of the UN Global Compact, ILO, ITC and UN Women with whom we work on entrepreneurship in Africa, inter alia.

Alongside UNESCO and its Member States and other partners, we advocate for the empowerment of girls and women in and through education, from an early age and in a lifelong perspective, as a member of the UNESCO-UNICEF Platform and Coalition to Accelerate Gender Equality. We are also members of the UNESCO-WWAP multi-stakeholder coalition to accelerate Gender Equality in the water domain.

For over 100 years, BPW International has been campaigning for women to earn the same wages as men for equal skills and positions. BPW's core objective is to promote women's leadership in the workplace and across all fields, including STEM and AI, and to combat gender stereotypes. Our advocacy is aimed at the business world, the education sector, and other public and private stakeholders.

At CSW69, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing and took stock of the Platform for Action and the documents of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century." To date, no country has fully achieved gender equality or the empowerment of girls and women, and in some countries their situation is very worrying. Women still represent 2/3 of illiterate people.

Women represent half of humanity and carry humanity (Dr MUKWEGE), yet they are used as weapons of war and are often victims of violence, aggravated in the digital age.

We welcome UNESCO's key role in promoting women as agents of change in conflict resolution under the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda - when women are involved in peace processes, there is a 30-40% chance that decisions will actually be implemented on time.

In 2024, UNESCO's Gender Equality priority represented more than 16% of the budget, the highest of any UN agency.

We also want to salute the actions and advocacy of the French National Commission to UNESCO, alongside NGOs for Gender Equality and for the Culture of Peace. For the second consecutive year, we, as a collective group of NGO-UNESCO partners for Peace, were granted the patronage of the Commission to organize the celebration of peace on the Role of Art in the Culture of Peace, and were supported by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee.

Only together will we achieve a just and equitable society for peace and sustainable development.