

FERENC HUDECZ: WELCOME REMARKS

ANSO Workshop on Women in Science –

Towards a Diversity of Research and Researcher

(ANSO-CAS-MTA-OWSD workshop 2021.11.18-19.)

Good afternoon, good evening and good morning Ladies and Gentlemen, President Bai, our Distinguished Speakers, dear Colleagues and all guests who are following us via the internet from South America through Africa to the Far East!

In my capacity as the Vice President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, on behalf of the Organizing Committee, it is my great pleasure and privilege to welcome you to our global Online Workshop devoted to one of the key issues of societies: Diversity.

Why is diversity important for science? Why did the organizers of our workshop, the Alliance of International Science Organizations (ANSO), the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD), and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) made the decision to choose this topic as its focus?

In the wake of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we as members of the Governing Board welcomed the idea that a series of topic-focused online meetings should be jointly organized by ANSO Members and Partners. It has been decided that the topics of these meetings should focus in particular on some key issues of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Among these topics one can identify **crucial horizontal priority areas**. At least one of them would surely include people from a variety of ethnicities, religions, cultures, sexual orientations, backgrounds, perspectives, areas of expertise, and other variables to participate in science. It is at this point, where we arrive at the notion of **diversity**.

Our workshop should be regarded as an important milestone on our quest towards the recognition of the utmost value of diversity. Before giving the floor to our Distinguished Speakers, let me single out one of the crucial topics which will be tackled today and tomorrow: this is **the question of meritocracy versus positive discrimination**. Meritocracy refers to a system in which power, wealth and privilege are determined by an individual's merit. However, the concept of meritocracy in academia often overlooks diversity in society, such as traditions, income inequality, access to STEM education, prejudice and other factors that might limit opportunities for students and researchers of –for instance– women or groups

of minority background. Considering these obstacles, can one safely say that positive discrimination measures are unethical?

The complexity of the issue derives from the great diversity of actors in science all over the world. The Distinguished **participants** of our workshop **may certainly contribute** to this dialogue with their comments based on their valuable experience from China, Japan, Kenya, Thailand, and Hungary. Honourable Speakers representing international organisations can without a doubt contribute to other aspects of the question as well.

While talking about diversity and engaging talented people with different backgrounds to participate in science **why should we concentrate on women?** The answer is quite simple. Almost half of the population of the world, by UN data 3,864,825 person in 2020 are women.

And **what can we say about gender equality in science?** Does the representation of women approach the 50% ratio? At this point I would like to draw your attention to an **important study** published in September with the title „*Gender Equality in Science: Inclusion and Participation of Women in Global Science Organizations. Results of two global surveys*”¹

The study reports on the results of surveys conducted amongst academies that are members of the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) and the International Science Council (ISC), as well as amongst international disciplinary unions and associations that are members of the ISC. The study was coordinated by GenderInSITE (Gender in Science, Innovation, Technology and Engineering).

The results of the survey are more than thought-provoking.

- The average share of women’s representation in senior academies is 16% - while the average share in young academies is 42%.
- The share of women academy members ranges from as high as 28% (biological sciences) and 27% (social sciences, humanities, arts) to as low as 10% (engineering sciences) and 8% (mathematical sciences).
- The average share of women serving on governing bodies is 29% for academies and 36% for disciplinary unions and associations.
- 46% of academies have programs or initiatives focusing on women in science, but only 16% report the availability of a sufficient budget to implement these activities.

¹ https://genderinsite.net/sites/default/files/GenderEqualityInScience_TwoGlobalSurveys.pdf
DOI: 10.24948/2021.06; ISBN: 9788894405446

- 22% of academies and 42% of unions and associations have a document that addresses sexual harassment in the workplace.
- 20% state that SDG 5 does not apply to their institution.

As data show **we still have a lot to do** in order to facilitate the involvement of women in research. The Organizing Committee of our workshop decided to step forward and take the initiative to **prepare a joint communication on women in science**. The starting point of the Recommendations of the proposed statement is a call for describing and analysing the situation of “women in science” in one’s society, culture so that we could bring this topic into the fore. Let us collect and study examples and learn from each other.

Scientific progress relies on problem solving and collaboration. When trying to answer complex questions, progress often results from diverse perspectives. That is, the ability to see the given problem differently. This is often the key to a breakthrough. Therefore, we can hardly afford not to make use of all the potential of mankind with all of its diversity.

Ladies and Gentlemen! Distinguished Speakers and Colleagues!

Now is the opportunity to exchange existing practices and elaborate on future thoughts. I would like to wish you all a very stimulating and fruitful workshop!