



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR

**Address by
the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Nataša Pirc Musar,
on the occasion of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science**

Presidential Palace and UN Headquarters, 11 February 2024

Today I stand in front of you on the shoulders of exceptional Slovenian women who have made history. Let me begin by remembering Alma Karlin, journalist, world traveller, amateur researcher and polyglot – an “influencer” of her time, who set out on a journey around the world with scarce funds and a typewriter just after the end of the First World War. The determined woman described her eight-year journey in articles and books that were published in various countries and at lectures at European universities and elsewhere.

Women in science are never only an added value. They – you – are essential for science, policy and decision-making.

In society, we have less potential if we discourage girls from pursuing the professions they desire due to stereotypes.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women have always been a priority of Slovenian foreign policy. But progress is slow and even the UN is unfortunately not leading by example. It is regrettable that in the 78 years since the UN's creation there has never been a woman UN Secretary-General and that the General Assembly has only had four female presidents and 74 men. Which is why I firmly support the initiative of the GWL Voices for a gender alternation policy for the Presidency of the General Assembly. I call on all member states to support this proposal for equitable gender representation in presiding over our most representative and prestigious UN body, the General Assembly. It is critical, ladies and gentlemen, for the UN to lead by example in the run up to the Beijing +30.

On 1 January 2024, Slovenia became a member of the UN Security Council. For the second time, we are again serving with dedication and a sense of urgency as a voice in support of the half of the world's population that is often left behind. As a member we will be prioritising a women, peace and security agenda, also through the climate

security nexus. Women need to be seen as principal agents for both peace and climate security and it is time to give them the voice they deserve – including their scientific voice.

My country is home to world-class female scientists and each year we award a woman for her scientific excellence. The title of Engineer of the Year 2023 was awarded to a woman with a master's degree in mechanical engineering who is a development engineer in the field of heating, ventilation and air conditioning for buildings and her motto is: "Every girl has wings; she just needs to take flight."

I am happy that Slovenia hosted a panel on biotechnology and medical research yesterday, under the title "Empowering Women and Girls in Science and in Leadership: From Discovery to the Market".

My life's motto has always been that everything I do must be my passion, so I never wake up in the morning and tell myself that I do not want to go to work. Only passion and love for the profession you engage in bring quality and outstanding results. Therefore, we should not categorise professions as male or female but encourage everyone to do what they love, where they find joy, and live out their dreams. That is why women must bravely and boldly break glass ceilings. And men, you must help and encourage us in this endeavour. Only then can we, as a society, become even more successful.