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UNITED NATIONS

TO THE

FIFTY FIFTH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Saint Lucia is pleased to join Member States in thanking the Secretary General for his comprehensive report on *"access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science, and technology including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work"*.

We note the observation that *"Science, technology and innovation can be a tool with which to accelerate the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals."* These goals are valid and vital objectives which can find greater realization with the full participation of women in our societies.

Saint Lucia is fully aware that the equal participation of women in this endeavor is essentially a rights issue that is enshrined in the very charter of the United Nations. We also recognize that it is also a common sense survival issue. Logic dictates that if 50% of a population does not play an integral role in science, technology or innovation then that society is hampered in its ability to contest effectively with competing groups.

Women bring unique talents to all spheres of human activity and for this reason it is absolutely essential that these distinct capacities are encouraged to flourish to the benefit of our civilizations and cultures.

It is almost redundant but it is important in order to personalize the objectives of this forum, to remind us here today of some of the women who have played an important part in the development of science:

Marie Curie, the indefatigable Polish-born French physicist and chemist, famous for her work on radioactivity was honored with two Nobel Prizes—in physics and chemistry- the first person, man or woman, to be so honored. Grace Hopper was a computer scientist in the United States Navy, whose ideas led to the development of the widely-used computer language, COBOL. At the beginning of her career, Elizabeth Arden, formulated products that she then manufactured and sold.

We also know that many other women throughout history played major roles in scientific discoveries but, unfortunately, these were down played or the praise was reserved for their male counterparts because science and technology were not seen as a woman's role.

Mr. Chairman, the Secretary General's Report shows that globally, there has been an overall increase in the enrollment of women in the science disciplines and points to the need to make science, particularly engineering and computer science, a more attractive career path for girls.

Computer technology is a particularly compelling area in which to encourage the participation of women, as it is a field where the demands to balance work and family life can be more easily

achieved. Promotion of women in computer technology thus has a practical component, as it lends itself to the dual career of a woman in science and a woman as a mother. The issue of compatibility with professional and private goals, particularly the goal of motherhood, has to be addressed when encouraging greater participation of women in certain fields. The ability to practically implement, within a given career, a woman's goals to both work and raise her children, will enable many more of the women who study science and technology to continue along in those careers.

We need to recognize that for women to have the freedom to choose science and technology careers, those careers must also respond to the essential choices she makes in her life to have a family and become a mother. To succeed in the integration of women in the science and technology fields, a woman's personal choices need to be respected and accommodated.

We are particularly aware of another positive long term derivative of women's emersion in this field. Parents are the first and most influential educators of their children. In this role mothers are able to encourage the pursuit and practice of science with both sons and daughters, thereby making them more aware of these disciplines and more likely to pursue them in the future.

For the reasons suggested in the report along with many others, women do tend to steer away from the fields of science and technology. From a lack of role models, to a preference for professions that directly benefit society or individuals, there are direct and indirect barriers to full participation of women. We need to recognize the uniqueness of women in formulating solutions that ensure their increased participation in the fields of science and technology.

Our developing countries in particular need to harness the talents of all of our citizens, as we strive to bring our countries fully into the 21st century. Our governmental policies and decision making, along with our academic opportunities, must encourage women, in greater numbers, to enter the scientific and technological fields. The first step has already been taken, which is the recognition, in forums such as these, of the scope and dimension of this task we face as nations. The next and most important step requires that the output from this assembly is implemented in concrete ways, thus supporting and enabling the talents of our women to be developed and included in the work of our communities and nations.

I thank you