

Address by Ms Elżbieta Rędrzakowska, Government Plenipotentiary for
Equal Treatment at the 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of
Women

New York, 22 February 2011

Ms Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured to represent Poland as the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment. I am convinced that ensuring full access for girls and women to education, training, science, and technology is a condition for progress and sustained development.

I am particularly glad that the JIN Commission for the Status of Women took up the subject of their participation in science and technology. It is precisely the year 2011 that has been named the year of Maria Skłodowska-Curie, an outstanding Polish scientist, the discoverer of radium and polonium and a Nobel Prize laureate. I am convinced that, thanks to the planned celebrations, the figure and her accomplishments will become an inspiration for girls and women in the world.

Poland treats the subject of access of women and girls to education and technology as a priority. In this we see one of the essential conditions for development and innovation. School duty, both for girls and boys, was first introduced in Poland already in 1918 – immediately after the re-achievement of independence. Girls and boys in Poland have the duty to continue their education until the age of 18. Polish law guarantees equal treatment, regardless of sex, among other things in education and employment. All the EU directives concerning equal treatment with regard to sex. The aim of an equal treatment of women and men was reflected in the new school programme, in all its educational stages, starting with preschool education.

Still several years ago about 56 percent of pupils from each year group group studied in schools whose education ended with a secondary school graduation exams. Today having left from junior high schools 84 percent of female and female pupils pick the above - mentioned schools. Government activity concentrates on the introduction of modern teaching methods, preparation of preschool education and increasing the school age. We also act in favour of improving school infrastructure and the financial situation of teachers. Male and female teachers' salaries in 2010 went up by 30 percent as compared with 2007. Thanks to fighting stereotypes and traditional barriers of a male-dominated world, women now prevail among the graduates of secondary and higher schools in Poland. More and more women choose technical faculties rather than dominated by

During the last decade, more than 50 per cent of new students, during a dozen or so years, the number of students in Poland has doubled. To meet the new challenges, the government has introduced an educational reform. A draft of an amendment of the Law on higher education was adopted in 2010 introducing an up-to-date model of functioning of Polish institutions of higher education envisages, among other things, the simplification of the scientific research for women and men and closer links between the academic world and the labour market.

These actions, accompanied by numerous educational-information campaigns encouraging women to pick technical faculties and leading roles as well as their full access to the labour market. This happens also through the dissemination of activities in favour of women's professional life with the family life. These projects, among others, include Gender Index, Socio-economic indicators, *Wymowa*, *Wizytówka dla dziewczynki*, *Laurelka Sze Boż*, or *Lista to technical at universities*. The last project encourages female high school students to take engineering studies, especially in highly technical faculties – in order to ensure their full and open access to the labour market. In 2010, as the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment I started to implement the *Gender Equal Treatment – System of Good Management* aimed at elaborating a cohesive and effective system of counteracting discrimination on administrative levels and promoting the establishment of a network of coordinators for Equal Treatment.

I am convinced that in order to ensure full access for girls and women to education and the labour market it is necessary to consolidate international partnership and synergy among institutions, governments, social partners and the civic society all over the world. The only way to achieve equality is to act together. I believe that this meeting is a step forward on that road. Thank you for your attention.