Declaration of Science Center and Museum Leadership Worldwide to the United Nations High-Level Roundtable at the Commission on the Status of Women 2011
February 22–March 4, 2011, New York

Leaders of Science Centers and Museums Worldwide,

Endorsing the mandate of the UN Commission on the Status of Women as defined in ECOSOC resolution 1996/6;

Recognizing that access to and sharing of scientific and technological knowledge is an extremely powerful tool in the effort to ensure economic progress for and the social welfare of girls and women around the world;

Acknowledging that pathways to success in science and technology education and employment disproportionately marginalize girls and women;

Convinced that all nations should strive to ensure that their citizens, especially girls and women, have essential knowledge of the scientific bases for decisions that will drive innovation, shape the landscape of public health, and inspire sustainable use of increasingly limited resources;

Building on support for the objectives and timetables of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, as expressed in the “Toronto Declaration” (June 2008) of science centers and museums worldwide;

Confident that the development and implementation of STEM educational programs and opportunities built upon a bias-free framework, especially those emphasizing positive female role models, are an effective means for combating gender inequities in science and technology careers;

Affirming that informal science education platforms, as highly visible and trusted hubs of activity, dialogue, and discourse about science and technology, can help reframe societal perceptions of science and technology, emphasizing the collaborative nature of the scientific enterprise and its positive impact on the world;

1. Welcome the 55th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women that will address these critical issues of 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.

2. Call for specific recognition of the valuable role that informal science education platforms play in promoting participatory learning, providing positive learning environments that empower girls to engage in scientific exploration, and raising the visibility of female role models in STEM careers.
3. **Commit** to help advance public understanding and engagement in these issues through education and training designed to enhance career pathways in the sciences, technology, and engineering for all; encouragement of full and equal participation of underserved communities, notably women; and leveraging informal science education platforms’ unique position to connect research and industry with local communities.

4. **Strongly urge** delegates to incorporate within the outcome document of the 55th session of the Commission, the following specific references to the valuable role of informal science education platforms in accelerating progress toward achievement of gender equity in science and technology education and careers.

   a) Progress toward the goals of the Commission requires increased commitment by all countries to greater investment in strategies focused specifically on supporting the engagement of girls and women in science and technology, and a commitment to action on eliminating gender discrimination and systemic barriers that marginalize girls and women from science and technology careers.

   b) Informal science education platforms—science centers and museums worldwide—are highly visible and trusted hosts of activity, dialogue, and broad information dissemination about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. They are important resources for the formal education system and contribute to strengthening the knowledge bases of their respective societies, and represent a strong influence on the motivation of students, especially girls, and their career choices.

   c) Science centers and museums worldwide should be developed, recognized and supported as vital meeting places for science and society that operate across geographical, economic, political, religious, and cultural boundaries; are trusted places of inclusion and equity where the public can actively engage with critical issues which affect society; and that impact the well-being, education, achievement, and skills of current and future generations.