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The 11th of February - International Day of Women in Science

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The history of The International Day of Women and Girls in Science started with a resolution about development of science and technologies on December 20, 2013. Equality of all genders from the point of view of innovations and discoveries was accepted in this document. And in 2015 it was proposed to announce an official holiday devoted to women-scientists and girl-scientists in honour of gender equality in the world of science.

The first celebration of the Day was held on February 11, 2016 and was marked by the forum at the UN headquarters. The annual celebration of this day aims at drawing additional attention to women's participation in the scientific field, and to highlight the achievements in the field of science, technology and innovation made by women and girls.

The main argument for establishment of the holiday was the fact, that it would promote the faster and better implementation of the plan for the development of humanity until 2030 for the transformation of our society [1].

The goal of the plan is fight gender inequality. Although the world community has made significant progress in this area over the past 15 years, women and girls still face barriers in this field. Today women make up less than 30% of researchers worldwide.

The resolution calls on all countries of the world to pay attention to the existing problem, to try to identify the causes of

the gender imbalance in the field of science, technology and innovation, as well as to organize programs of activities to involve women and girls in the scientific environment [2].

Girls are also mentioned in the name of the holiday with the aim to update the topic of participation in scientific communities, circles and other associations of the scientific profile of the school period of education not only for boys, but also for girls, whose participation in them is also noticeably lower. In addition, the participants of the events as part of celebration of the new International Day pay attention to the work of educators and teachers in school and preschool education institutions, where the principles of gender equality should be taken into account [1].

By 2021, only 23 women scientists who have made discoveries in physics, chemistry and medicine have won the most prestigious scientific award in the world, and more than 620 people have received the Nobel Prize in these fields of science.

UNESCO also recalls that especially few women work in the information and telecommunications sector: they make up only 3% of information and communication technology specialists and 5% in natural sciences and mathematics.

One of the reasons why women scientists are generally absent from the history of science is that it is not so easy to find information about them in the public domain. Even today, the number of women in science remains lower than the number of men, especially in some fields. Only 12 % of candidates in the field of computer technology and 22 % in physics in 2018 were representatives of the weaker gender [3].

Another reason is that women do not fit the conventional image of a scientist. The idea of a male researcher is stable. But a look at history can both challenge this image and provide some explanation for why science still has such a masculine bias.

The traditional view of science as a body of knowledge, rather than an activity, ignores the contributions of women as co-authors, focusing instead on the facts gained from big discoveries and the men who made them public.

The historian Margaret Rossiter called this systematic bias against women the «Matilda effect». The Matilda effect is the systematic denial of women's contributions to science, the belittling of their work, and the attribution of women's work to male colleagues. The essence of it is either to completely deny their contribution to science, or to belittle the significance of their achievements, as well as to attribute the discoveries made by women to their male colleagues [4].

Currently, the exclusion of women from the field of professional activity is one of the reasons that they have become more active in those scientific disciplines that still rely heavily on field research, such as astronomy and botany. It was here that science began to divide into a hierarchy of “hard” male-dominated sciences, such as physics, and “soft” sciences, such as botany and biology which were considered more acceptable to women.

While we should be careful not to overestimate the historical activism and role of women in science, it is important to remember the scientists who have contributed greatly to science and the barriers they have overcome for science. This is one of the areas of work to overcome the continuing tension between femininity and science, as well as to provide women with role models and to increase their participation in all scientific disciplines [5].

References:

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