

Remarks by Ambassador at the First G20 EMPOWER networking event  
(TU Delft University, 11 January 2023)

***Topic: India's ambitions and plans for G20 Empower  
and role modeling female STEM talent***

- Minister of Education, Culture & Science H.E. Robert Dijkgraaf
- TU Delft President Mr. Tim van der Hagen
- Ambassador Shefali Razdan Duggal
- C-suite Advocates of G20 Empower in the Netherlands
- Friends and colleagues

Let me begin by wishing everyone a very happy and healthy new year.

2. I am delighted to be a part of the First G20 EMPOWER networking event to deliberate on an extremely relevant theme of 'Women in STEM'. I thank the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Dutch G20 Empower team for this timely initiative.

3. TU Delft, where we meet today, is an excellent example of collaboration between India and Netherlands in the field of STEM, with many Indian students, PhD scholars and faculty, including female students pursuing higher studies in STEM.

4. This year is very special for India as we have assumed the Presidency of the G20 for the first time. Nearly 200 G20 related meetings are planned leading up to the Summit in September. It will be our endeavor to make India's G20 Presidency inclusive, ambitious, decisive, collaborative and action-oriented.

5. We are guided by the theme of "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**" or "**One Earth · One Family · One Future**". We aim to use our Presidency to contribute meaningfully towards finding solutions to global challenges. Our priorities include green development, climate finance, sustainable lifestyles, circular economy, accelerated progress on SDGs, women's empowerment, inclusive & resilient growth, tech-enabled transformation, digital public infrastructure, food & energy security, development cooperation, disaster risk reduction and multilateral reforms.

6. Women-led development is a major priority of India's G20 Presidency. We believe that women as entrepreneurs, as members of the workforce and as leaders play a critical role in charting the path to prosperity of all societies.

7. Under the overarching theme of Women-led development, we will be focusing on three key areas, namely, women entrepreneurship, women leadership at grass-roots level and STEM education for girls as a game changing pathway to empowerment.

8. Under the first priority area of women entrepreneurship, we aim to leverage the EMPOWER initiative for enhancing access to mentoring and capacity building, access to markets and financing, sharing best practices and scaling up innovations. One of the deliverables targeted is establishment of a G20 E-platform to exchange, promote and adapt innovative best practices that have emerged from women led entrepreneurs. **We invite the G20 Empower advocates from the Netherlands to actively contribute to this goal.**

9. The second priority area will focus on increasing women's participation and leadership at grass-root levels in decision-making roles. And the third priority will be to focus on increasing public-private partnerships to improve the quality and reach of STEM education for women and girls through scholarships in non-traditional education sectors of STEM like Artificial Intelligence.

10. Before I conclude, I would like to share some experiences of India's journey of enhancing women's participation in STEM to harness their talents & skills in effectively responding to the pressing challenges of today. In India, women make up for 43% of the total graduates under STEM, and 34% of the work force in IT and related industries. Women are breaking the glass ceiling and excelling in all realms of STEM from outer space missions to defense technology to developing vaccines. At the grassroots, there are 1.45 million women elected representatives in village panchayats, comprising 46% of the total.

11. Yet there are several challenges to overcome in terms of moving up the academic and administrative ladder due to systemic and structural factors. To address this, the Government of India is working to create a better enabling environment and a culture of support for women in STEM. This includes policy initiatives like Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (or GATI) to support the development of a gender-equitable ecosystem within higher education and research institutions and a programme to

strengthen R&D infrastructure of women-only universities. Recently in September, a national web portal I-STEM has been launched to provide a platform for women researchers to deliberate on achievements, issues, and exchange ideas on taking the country forward through advances in science, technology and innovation.

12. We are also working with many partner countries to encourage women scientists. One good example is the Indo-US Fellowship for Women in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) which provides opportunities to Indian women scientists to undertake collaborative research in premier institutions in USA to enhance their research capabilities.

13. I wish to conclude here by sharing a quote from the Prime Minister of India – I quote ***“our thinking is not just that we should empower women via science but also empowering science by the contribution of women.”*** Unquote

14. The G20 Empower meetings will take place in India in February and April (Agra and Thiruvananthapuram), followed by the G20 Empower Summit in June (Indore). We look forward to active contribution of Netherlands as Guest Country and in particular all the G20 EMPOWER advocates present today in supporting the agenda and efforts of India’s G20 Presidency.

I thank you all for your attention.

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