

2016 Girls in ICT Day
Opening Remarks by Ambassador Hamamoto
Thursday, April 28, 2016

Good morning, everybody. It is really great to be here today with all of you. I want to congratulate ITU for putting on another successful Girls in ICT Day, and not just here in Geneva, but around the world.

Programing robots, coding and 3D satellite mapping – I can't wait to visit the exhibits and finally witness the exciting projects I've been hearing so much about. With these projects, you're showing other girls the vast potential ICTs have to offer; you're showing them the future.

And that's what I want to talk about today – the careers that await young women interested in this sector – and more importantly, the knowledge and skills they'll need to access those jobs...knowledge and skills necessary to solve some of our toughest global challenges.

When I was your age, I loved science and math. I still do. After high school, I knew I wanted to become an engineer because like you, I questioned assumptions and wanted to solve problems and make things better. Those STEM skills led to my first job after college – writing computer programs to control hydroelectric power plants in order to maximize the production of clean energy.

Today, with climate change, we're more conscious of this kind of technology. But back then, this wasn't necessarily the case. The skills I developed on that job positioned me well for my next job, in the telecommunications industry. And one thing led to another, as I capitalized on this skill base, and here I am today! The point is, STEM education and ICT skills will give you an incredibly valuable foundation from which to draw upon, no matter which career path you decide to take.

It is expected that 90% of ALL future jobs will require ICT skills. And, more and more, employers will be struggling to fill these open jobs. In the United States alone, the Department of Labor projects that by 2020 there will be 1.4 million computer specialist job openings in America. And unfortunately, U.S. universities are expected to only produce enough qualified graduates to fill 29% of these jobs.

So, we want you – no, we NEED you, to become tomorrow's innovators, scientists, and entrepreneurs.

President Obama said that “Science is more than a school subject, or the periodic table, or the properties of waves. It is a critical way to understand and explore and engage with the world – a mindset that says we can use reason and logic and honest inquiry to reach new conclusions and solve big problems.”

I couldn't agree more. The world needs science and science needs women. We have to do everything possible to change the fact that women and girls are vastly under-represented in STEM education, in the ICT sector and in leadership positions generally.

Which is why, today, the U.S. Mission and ITU are excited to launch a speed mentoring program for girls interested in STEM. I'll be in the exhibit hall later with several of my colleagues to speak with you and answer any questions you may have.

The world is changing fast, thanks in large part to ICTs. In this increasingly complex and interconnected world, success is driven not only by what you know, but by what you can do with what you know.

As you to continue to explore and engage with the world in new ways, I encourage you to continue to pursue the study and use of ICTs. It's a very wise and worthwhile investment in your future.

Thank you.