were leaders at scientific institutions, members of scientific boards or headed large technology companies; and women scientists and engineers faced difficulty in gaining recognition for their work and progressing in their career. The report also noted the importance of ensuring that the focus of science and its applications responded to women’s needs and situations, and that national and international research priorities benefited women and men equally.

The Secretary-General concluded that greater attention must be paid to gender-equality issues in science, technology and innovation. Increasing women’s access to scientific knowledge and technology; promoting women’s participation in science and technology education; and ensuring that women contributed to science, technology and innovation could contribute to accelerating development. He recommended that the Commission on the Status of Women call on Governments, the UN system and other stakeholders to mainstream a gender perspective in all science, technology and innovation policies and programmes; develop national strategies to increase the participation of women and girls in science and technology education and training and employment; promote a positive image of careers in science and technology for women; and ensure gender parity in decision-making positions in science academies, funding institutions, academia and the public and private sector.

Also in accordance with resolution 2009/15 [YUN 2009, p. 1155], the Secretary-General submitted a report [E/CN.6/2011/5] on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on 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.

Despite an expansion of educational opportunities in the preceding decades, which included a larger share of the world’s population accessing formal education and a steady improvement in the global ratio of girls’ to boys’ enrolment, gender gaps remained in education access. Particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and Southern Asia, access to post-primary education remained restricted for women and girls. Gender disparities in terms of access and occupational segregation were often more pronounced in technical and vocational education than in general education, and women and girls remained overrepresented in the humanities and social sciences and underrepresented in science and engineering. Narrowed gaps in education access were visible in countries that undertook reforms to address the disadvantages faced by girls, which included financial and cultural barriers. Initiatives included recruiting female teachers, providing incentives for their deployment to rural areas, giving teachers gender-sensitization training and building satellite schools. Financial incentives for families with limited resources helped increase girls’ enrolment, as did awareness-raising campaigns to convince parents of the importance of girls’ education. As early marriage or pregnancy could force girls to drop out of school, Government measures included education code revisions allowing teenage mothers to return to school. Concerns about girls’ safety, particularly their vulnerability to sexual violence on the way to or within school, were addressed by some Governments through investment in water, energy or transportation infrastructure. Non-formal training—a complement to formal education that could reach out-of-school women and girls—was of particular importance to emergency-affected countries, while non-formal education remained a critical tool for eradicating illiteracy among adult women.

Women’s labour force participation increased, but not on par with educational gains, and the quality of women’s employment had not much improved. Among the 20- to 24-year-old population, women continued to lag behind men in all regions. South Asia recorded the greatest gap, with 82 per cent of men employed or seeking employment compared with 27 per cent of women. Furthermore, progress towards full employment was not always connected to decent work. Women entered the labour market, but in jobs that paid less, and did not guarantee worker’s rights, extend social protection or promote social dialogue.

The Secretary-General highlighted the need to regularly evaluate the impact of initiatives at the national level to determine the most effective way of reducing gender gaps in education. More attention to the transition by young women from school to work was needed to ensure that gains in education translated into employment opportunities. He suggested that the Commission consider calling on Governments, the UN system and other relevant actors to systematically mainstream a gender perspective in all education and employment policies and programmes, and monitor and evaluate the impact on women and men; take measures to eliminate inequalities related to age, poverty, geographical location, language, ethnicity, religion and disability affecting women and girls in accessing and participating in education at all levels; remove economic barriers to girls’ education; ensure women’s and girls’ equal access to technical and vocational training; and ensure that secondary and tertiary institutions equip women and girls with job readiness skills and provide career guidance.

Commission action. On 22 February, as part of the priority theme for its fifty-fifth session [E/2011/27], the Commission on the Status of Women held a high-level round table on access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and