

**Workshop "Women empowerment and gender equality, responsible research and innovation" – Solidarity Project**

**"The institutional support to women empowerment in sciences and in science management"  
27<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

I am honoured to accept this invitation to share these words with all of you.

When in 1973, five months before the 25<sup>th</sup> of April's carnation revolution, I was taken to the school's principal for reading a book called: "**About WOMAN's Emancipation**", I could hardly imagine that almost fifty years later we would still be challenged by the unbalanced gender equality.

I am a biologist, working at the Portuguese Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests for 2 decades, and serving as manager for 13 years. I was the director of eight protected areas and other national forest, leading a team of more than 150 people, from different professional groups, academic and cultural backgrounds.

Last month, I was elected the President of the "Ordem do Biólogos", a professional body for biologists, especially those working in Portugal. The 'Order of Biologists' is headquartered in Lisbon and has regional branches in several other cities in Portugal. I am the first female president of this organization, albeit headed by male biologists. Currently, we make an effort to work in teams with gender equality.

We recognize it is challenging to balance work and family life, and meanwhile maintaining a very active social life. Women in leadership positions are often more criticized and scrutinized than men, which is double emphasized by other women and by men. On other hand, females occupy less often superior hierarchical positions in public administration, in the direction of universities, and CEOs of companies. This has a strongly cultural root: there have been many centuries of a patriarchal society and for that reason society is imbricately dominated by prejudices, bias, practices and rituals that sub-alternate female power.

We should all continue to stimulate young girls to aspire to leadership positions. It is fundamental to promote gender quotes, which improve gender balance across all society sectors. Moreover, it is essential to improve the social support to maternity, a fundamental pillar of every society. And last but not least, to identify and act accordingly to abolish abusive discrimination towards woman.

Sincerely,

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