Thank you Madam Chair. Let me start by thanking you all for inviting me to be part of this Session. My following presentation includes four parts. First, the basic situation of China's higher education; Second, women's access to higher education and their participation in decision-making; Third, challenges faced by women in higher education; Fourth, suggestions and countermeasures.

I. Basic Situation of Higher Education in China

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Over the past 70 years, especially since the reform and opening up in 1978, while promoting social progress, China's higher education has developed rapidly along with the country's political and economic development and the continuous enhancement of comprehensive national strength. During this period, China has enacted and promulgated a number of laws and regulations one after another, such as the Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China, the
Action Plan for the Revitalization of Education in the 21st Century, and the Outline of the National Medium-and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020), and successively launched the project of building about 100 key universities and a batch of first-class disciplines for the 21st century, as well as construction of a number of high-level research universities with international standards and world-class universities by implementing the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education and sustainable development.

With unremitting efforts, China's higher education has made considerable development and progress, have gone through the process from "relatively backward" to "scale first", from "elite education" to "popular education" (currently moving towards "universal stage"), and from "bringing in" to "going out".

Here, I would like to take the 40 years of reform and opening up as an example to illustrate the development of higher education in China with some figures.

In 1978, there were 598 colleges and universities in China; by 2017, the number of universities/colleges had risen to 2914.

In 1978, a total of 401,000 students were enrolled in undergraduate
colleges and universities; by 2017, this number had reached 7,614,900.

In 1978, there were 867,000 students in colleges and universities in China; by 2017, it had reached 37.79 million.

In 1978, the gross enrollment rate of higher education nationwide was only 1.55%, which had risen to 45.7% by 2017.

After decades of hard work, like many other countries in the world, the proportion of female students in higher education in China exceeds that of male students. Women have equal access to higher education as men, which lays an important foundation for their development and improvement of their social status.

II. Women's access to Higher Education and their Participation in Decision-making and Management

China has always upheld the constitutional principle of gender equality, which is also a basic state policy for promoting progress in the country and in society. Over the years, China has progressively improved its laws and regulations, developed public polices to promote gender equality in education, and also adhered to the principles of fair competition, with safeguard measures in all aspects of enrollment planning, the filing of
applications and admissions, so as to ensure that women enjoy equal
rights and opportunities to receive higher education as their male
compatriots, which has greatly increased the proportion of women in
higher education.

One of the most remarkable achievements in promoting gender equality
in China should be women's access to higher education. In 1980, the
proportion of female students in higher education institutions was only
23.44%; in 1990, the proportion reached 33.7%; in 2000, 38.1%; and in
2010, it took a historic leap, reaching 50.86%, surpassing male students
for the first time. By the end of 2017, more than 25,477,000 students
were enrolled in Colleges and universities, of which 13,278,000 were
female students, accounting for 52.54% of all students. In 2017, female
postgraduates accounted for 48.42%; female undergraduate in adult
higher education institutions made up 57.8%; while the proportion of
female web-based undergraduates was 47.34%. According to the data
published by the "Blue Book of Campus Recruitment in China (2018
Autumn Recruitment)" , among the 2018 college/universities graduates,
52% were female students, which was 4 percentage points higher than
that of male graduates.
With the development of higher education and promotion of gender equality, the number of teachers in China's higher education institutions has been expanding, and the proportion of female teachers has gradually increased. In 1979, only 26.2% of full-time female teachers were in higher education institutions. By 2017, the proportion of female teachers reached 49.83%. According to incomplete statistics, female professors account for about one fifth of the total number of professors in the field of higher education.

In order to effectively promote more women to enter decision-making and management positions at all levels and in all fields, including in higher education, China has taken various measures, including promulgation of special policies and programmes. For instance, the Program for the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020) clearly sets out targets and requirements for women's participation in decision-making and management bodies at all levels. In addition, preferential treatment is also given to women in the selection and appointment of leaders. As a consistent practice, when all conditions are equal, women candidates are preferred in the selection and appointment process. In open and competitive selections, the number of positions and quotas for women are specified as appropriate.
The implementation of these policies and measures has brought the development of female presidents and leaders of colleges/universities in China into a new stage, and more women now have entered the decision-making bodies. In 2018, a finding of survey (conducted in the year 2015 and 2016) on women's leadership in 272 universities in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Chongqing municipalities that are directly under the central government was released. According to the survey report, there were 349 female university leaders in above 272 universities, which accounted for 18.63% of the total number of university leaders. The proportion of female chief leaders (full president level) in above universities accounted for 15.5%, that was higher than 4.5% in 2006.

Here is a detailed description of the situation in 4 municipalities. There were 139 female leaders in 89 universities in Beijing, representing 20.41% of the total number of university leaders; 80 female leaders in 54 universities in Tianjin, accounting for 22.35%; 85 female leaders in 66 universities in Shanghai, accounting for 19.86%; and 45 female leaders in 63 universities in Chongqing, accounting for 11.08%.

III. Challenges Women Face in Higher Education
First, the problem of stereotyped traditional role in higher education, or the gender segregation of professions and disciplines still exists, which has refrained the space for the development of women. Traditionally, girls are considered suitable for studying humanities and social sciences, while boys are suitable for engineering technology. This is reflected in the fact that female students are mainly in the so-called "female subjects" related to their traditional roles, such as teachers, medical care, language, accounting, social workers while male students mainly concentrate on computer, finance, engineering and construction, high-tech and other high-income so-called "male disciplines".

We all know that the gender segregation of professional disciplines in higher education directly affects or leads to the structural unemployment of women in the labor market, and continues and consolidates the "occupational gender segregation of industries" in the field of employment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has investigated occupational gender segregation in the labor market and found that in the global labor market, the so-called "male-fit" jobs are seven times as many as the so-called "female-fit" jobs.

Second, due to various reasons of history, economic and social development as well as unbalanced regional development, there is a big
gap in the allocation of higher education resources in the eastern, central and western regions of China, resulting in regional differences in access opportunities for higher education. This is particularly disadvantageous for women from poor economic families and from rural and remote areas (due to coupled with discriminatory stereotypes on women’s and girl’s education). What’s more, there also have been instances where certain colleges/universities have lowered minimum scores for male students in certain programmes although such practice is prohibited by law.

Third, although female teachers account for a large proportion in higher education, they are mostly concentrated on liberal arts. And the proportion of female professors is obviously low. The development of female leaders in higher education is also facing many challenges, such as their appointments are limited or influenced by traditional gender roles; their development space as well as the supportive environment is insufficient. In general speaking, the number of female at decision-making levels in higher education is lower than that in other fields (in government and legislative bodies). For example, in over 70 universities affiliated to the Ministry of Education of China, female leadership only accounts for 8.6% of the total number of university leaders.
IV. Suggestions and countermeasures

Striving for gender equality in educational structure, process and outcome remains a great challenge for us. This is a worldwide problem. While seeing the achievements of women in higher education, we should also fully recognize the gaps and challenges in achieving gender equality in higher education. In this respect, we still have a long way to go.

Following are some of my personal views.

First, mainstreaming gender perspectives into all aspects of policies, plans and training programmes related to higher education is essential to achieve gender equality in the field of higher education. Although there is global recognition the importance of gender mainstreaming, a number of constrains remain, including lack of full understanding of the nature of gender mainstreaming, lack of sufficient resources and lack of targeted measures for the implementation. Therefore, it is important to take affirmative action to address these constrains, including the strong political will and commitment of leaders, the establishment of effective accountability mechanisms, strengthening capacity building and awareness-raising programmes for all leaders as well as teaching and administrative staff in the field of higher education and the
incorporation of a gender perspective into all aspects of the educational system.

Second, creating a sound policy environment for women's participation in decision-making and management in area of higher education by formulating and adopting a series of positive policy measures. Such measures should include temporary special measures, such as quotas or a reserved number of seats for women which are the most effective means, at least initially, of increasing women’s representation in decision-making positions.

Third, enhancing women’s political and economic power by strengthening capacity-building in order to improve their self-confidence and self-consciousness in decision-making and management process. At the same time, in order to alleviate the pressure of women’s multiple roles, especially to liberate them from the tedious household work, it is necessary to vigorously develop various social or family services, thus creating good conditions for their participation in leadership. This is conducive to helping competent and talented women better display their intelligence in decision-making positions.

Fourth, measures should be taken to eliminate gender stereotypes and
structural barriers that potentially deter female enrolment in non-traditional field of education, and to undertake a broad campaign to educate people and push for change in the valuation and perception of girls and women. In addition, it is also important to step up guidance activities and provide specific training and to diversify academic and vocational choices for female students and encourage them to pursue non-traditional paths.

In conclusion, I wish to say that the key to achieving substantive gender equality ultimately lies in the empowerment of women. The struggle for gender equality in various fields, including in higher education has made major advances but it is far from won. Let us keep up the fight.