

Transcending Societal Issues for Space Exploration (12)
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MORE SPACE FOR GIRLS

Abstract

Abstract “The main goal of Women in Aerospace is to improve the representation of women in the aerospace and also to help the youngest to find their own career path”. This statement made by the Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) Simonetta di Pippo shows the importance of empowering women. The need to explore is inherent to the human being, and therefore, space exploration has always been the ultimate goal. On 12 April 1961, this goal was achieved - Yuri Gagarin made the first spaceflight in history. After the successful flights of Soviet cosmonauts, Sergei Korolev had the triumph idea to send a woman into space. Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to travel into space, making a flight on 16 June 1963 on the Vostok-6 spacecraft. The purpose of this paper is to propose an education initiative to empower young women by enabling them with a network of senior professionals from space agencies, industry and academia, inter alia. Achieving gender equality is a vital challenge in our world. Despite the latest improvements in this regard, women are still underrepresented in scientific careers, with the highest inequality in engineering, computer science, and physical sciences. According to research by Microsoft, girls’ interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) starts at the age of 11, and that interest begins to decrease by the age of 15. Based on the research outcome, the initiative will be focusing on young women between 11 and 18 years old. The competition will consist of three stages: 1) an online test where participants choose a field of interest like Space Medicine, Near-Earth Objects, Space Exploration, and more; 2) a project phase where issues within their field of interest are tackled and solutions are proposed; 3) and a final presentation before a panel of experts. The best candidates will be awarded a mentoring program. The education initiative will go along with the Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” Moreover, it will conspire Goal 5 (SDG5), with a purpose to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” adopted by all United Nations Member States. Making “space for women” a reality will contribute to achieving gender equality and enabling girls and women to engage socially and politically, and economically.