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Director General Fabiola Gianotti
European Organization for Nuclear Research

Director General Gianotti

We write to express our support for the actions you have taken in regards to Professor Alessandro Strumia, who gave a talk at CERN on 28 September 2018, that we can only characterize at the very least as uninformed. Professor Strumia suggested that the reason women were under-represented in Physics was because they lacked innate “interest and ability”. Further he claimed that not only were women not discriminated against, but rather, men were. He based these claims on statistical analyses he performed on citations and publications, equating correlations with causation for various trends he presented. His naive analyses failed to take into account essential factors such as the effects of the many inherent biases in the system as well as differences in gendered societal and cultural expectations. We applaud the speed with which CERN disavowed his presentation.

We whole heartedly agree with CERN’s position, and feel that such behavior and biased opinions have very little to do with science. There is substantial evidence that science, amongst many other fields, suffers from considerable bias against¹ and harassment² of women. While the research on this is decades old³, our field has only recently started taking steps towards addressing such issues. Unfortunately, the recent progress in our field has led to backlash such as the talk presented by Professor Strumia.

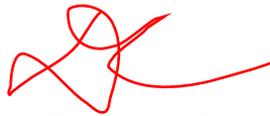
¹Moss-Racusin *et al.* in <http://www.pnas.org/content/109/41/16474>

²Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Washington <https://doi.org/10.17226/24994>

³Wenneras and Wold in <https://www.nature.com/articles/387341a0>

Our department repudiates the notions put forth in Strumias talk in the strongest possible terms. The theories he presented are not only inconsistent with science⁴, but also send a discouraging message within our community, especially among young women considering a career in physics. We value the contributions of all who study and work in our department and appreciate the added value brought by the contributions of women at all levels. We do all we can to create an environment with equal treatment for all.

Sincerely



David Cinabro
Professor and Chair
for the faculty of the
Wayne State Department of Physics
and Astronomy

⁴O'Dea *et al.* in <http://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-018-06292-0>