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Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon
First Minister of Scotland

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Dear Ann

Thank you for your letter of 15 April 2016 inviting me to provide a greeting to be read to delegates at the opening ceremony of the Soroptimist International annual conference being held in Malta.

I would be delighted to provide you with a greeting, enclosed, and would like to wish you the best of luck in what will be an extremely successful event.

NICOLA STURGEON

I am very pleased to offer Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland my best wishes for your 82nd Federation Conference in Malta. This is a fitting location, with Malta electing its first female President - Agatha Barbara, in their third electoral term following the country achieving independence – both achievements are things to be celebrated!

The theme of this year's conference is one close to my heart and addressing the lack of women in STEM careers is one I have committed to tackle further over my next term in Government.

However, along with celebrating the many significant advances that women have achieved towards fulfilling their potential in society and at work, with the number of female entrants in STEM subjects at Scottish universities and the proportion of STEM passes gained by female school leavers at higher levels also increasing, we must do more.

That is why I have made it a priority for my Government to develop and implement a Scottish STEM strategy, roll out our programme of school STEM clusters and develop a Scottish STEM ambassador network, so that by 2020 every Scottish school is working with a STEM partner from the private, public or third sectors to encourage more girls to study STEM related subjects.

I applaud the work undertaken by the Soroptimists' to promote the empowerment of women in the UK and internationally and I welcome the attention that you are giving to this vital issue and look forward to hearing the outcome of your conference's deliberations.

Please accept my warmest congratulations on your achievements to date and my very best wishes for an extremely successful event.