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**CSTD 2017-18 priority theme on ‘Building digital competencies to benefit from existing  
and emerging technologies with special focus on gender and youth dimensions’**

Statement submitted by

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**CSTD 2017**  
**Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017**  
**15:00**

**Building digital competencies to benefit from existing and emerging technologies, with special focus on gender and youth dimensions**

*Statement*

- Excellencies; Ladies and Gentlemen,
- **what we will discuss today is not a women's/gender issue, it is everyone's issue.**
  
- **ACCESS.** That's what I'd like to start with today. **Women have always fought for it. Access to voting booths. To boardrooms. To parliaments. To education, to health care and to infrastructure.**
  
- **Today, women and girls need access to the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs).** There is one number I want you to remember today: [250 million fewer women than men have ACCESS to the Internet.](#) And the global Internet user gender **gap is widening** -- with the gap highest in Least Developed Countries.
  
- In today's fast-changing world, we've become used to these big numbers -- to the point where **we're almost numb** to what they really represent. **But behind each statistic**, there is a real person, a girl who wants to take a course online, or a female entrepreneur who would like to set up a website for her products - **- somebody with a dream.**
  
- And so the question is, how do we help them make this dream a reality? **How do we bridge the digital gender gap?** make no mistake: The digital gender gap is not going to close on its own. It has its roots in a complex set of social, economic, and cultural barriers. Therefore, we will overcome these obstacles only **by working together.**
  
- To ensure that individuals can engage in digital activities and adapt rapidly to new and unexpected occupations and skills needs, a stronger emphasis has to be placed in promoting strong levels of foundation skills, digital literacies, higher order thinking competencies as well as social and emotional skills.

- Unfortunately, when it comes to skills and awareness there is a big gap: women are largely excluded. Women are less likely to be online than men, less likely to choose technology-related studies, less likely to be working as a tech professional – and MUCH less likely to be in a tech leadership role.
- This is why **we need to better understand what are the barriers that are preventing women and girls to access the Internet, and how emerging technologies could eliminate them rather than increase the divide.**
- Artificial intelligence (AI) has enormous potential for social good. Lives across the world can be improved in fundamental ways. Yet, the transformative power of AI brings with it complicated challenges, ranging from ethical issues to societal challenges including the disruptive impact of AI on employment. This is particular salient given that women are expected to gain one job for every five jobs lost to technology advances. Re-skilling for an AI world will be high on the agenda of policy makers in the coming years.
- The ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development set up the Working Group on Education which observed a large share of the youth and adult populations do not possess new digital skills. It directed special attention to the often-overlooked 'soft' skills required to thrive a technology-saturated world.
- Furthermore, ILO and ITU are leading the Digital Skills Campaign of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth in order to foster decent and inclusive employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Key objectives of this campaign:
  - Bring digital skills training to five million young people around the world by 2030 to equip them with job-ready, transferable digital skills;
  - Encourage the creation of new job opportunities in order to integrate more young women and men in the labour market and help digital economies flourish;
  - Promote an enabling environment where youth can seize the employment and entrepreneurship opportunities offered by the growing digital economy.
- Training in- and out-of-school youth with basic and advanced digital skills promises to connect young people with unprecedented job opportunities in the digital economy, leading to innovation, higher productivity and competitiveness, expanding markets, access to work and entrepreneurship opportunities.

- More information about the Digital Skills Campaign will be available on the “Decent Jobs for Youth” online platform, being launched on 29 November.
- It is important to highlight the [Report](#) of the UNCTAD Inter-sessional Panel on Building digital competencies to benefit from existing and emerging technologies with special focus on gender and youth dimensions.
- At International Telecommunication Union, we are committed to **ensuring that ICTs are used effectively to achieve ALL the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals**, including achieving gender equality (Goal 5).
- Gender is a big part of everything we do. I’ll take 2 examples. First, **Girls in ICT Day**, a global movement to encourage girls to pursue opportunities in technology. Since 2011, more than 300'000 girls reached; Over 9'000 events around the world 166 countries reached. **The world needs ICTs; ICTs need women and girls more than ever.**
- Second, as highlighted in the report, **EQUALS, the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age** has the objective to establish a network of organizations working together to ensure that women are given access, are equipped with skills, and develop the leadership potential of girls and women to work in the ICT industry.
- The **G20 Digital Economy Declaration** -- which was adopted in Germany just a month ago -- **called on the G20 to swiftly bridge the widening digital gender divide and take inspiration from initiatives like EQUALS.**
- The Partnership is constituted of **three coalitions**- Access, Skills and Leadership corresponding to the areas of action. Each coalition is led by different organizations such as GSMA, ITC, UNCTAD and UN Women that will help the coalition members implement the planned deliverables.
- Since we want to take an evidence based approach, the **Research Group**, led by the United Nations University, is coordinating a group of 26 universities and research institutions with the aim to identify gaps and potential benefits of new technologies.
- Another significant result from the Partnership has been the launch of the **Gender Digital Inclusion Map** which is an interactive visualization that displays initiatives that are working toward bridging the gender digital divide around the world. We have currently mapped 550 projects and the numbers continue to grow.

- Furthermore, in an effort to address the digital gender divide, the ITU's Council Working Group on International Internet-related public policy issues (CWG-Internet) has launched an Online Open Consultation on the topic of "Bridging the Digital Gender Divide". All stakeholders are invited to contribute, by 23 December 2017 through an online open consultation process. This online open consultation process will be followed by a physical open consultation meeting on 22 January 2018 at ITU Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.
- I started this presentation by speaking about access. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has made **universal access to ICTs** a priority. It is **one of ITU's top priorities**. And I'm here today to explore **how we can work together to bring the possibilities of ICTs to all the world's people. No exceptions!**
- Finally, I'd like to highlight the importance of data collection and availability. ITU's data collection includes the possibilities for sex- disaggregation for all indicators related to individuals accessing and using ICTs. These indicators can also be gender-disaggregated by age, education, labour force status and occupation. This information feeds analysis and provides solid evidence of women's participation in the information society. It is by collecting, disseminating and monitoring data that we can address shortcomings and set the bar higher for women and girls around the world.