Priority theme 2 on Building digital competencies to benefit from existing and emerging technologies with a special focus on gender and youth dimensions.

Statement submitted by

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
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DISCLAIMER: The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the panelists for their insightful presentations.

Bridging the gender digital divide is essential if we are to achieve gender equality and sustainable development in the 21st century.

And we know that women and girls all over the world must have equal rights and equal access to opportunities to shape the global knowledge society.

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we need both: digital inclusion and digital equality. Digital skills are vital for both individuals and economies. It is about having the right access, skills, motivation, opportunities to go online.

The international community and public and private entities need to strengthen partnerships to help women and girls to benefit from all the advantages the internet can offer.

We have heard it: an estimated 90% of future jobs will require ICTs.
• These changes create **significant opportunities for women to thrive** – but only if we reverse current trends. For instance:

  ✓ In upper secondary education globally only 10 per cent of women, compared to 60 per cent of men, are STEM graduates.

  ✓ Right now, fewer than 17% of computer science degrees go to women students.

  ✓ Over 1.7 billion women do not own a mobile phone.

• **Thus a growing gender digital divide prevents women from accessing the innovations and technologies that enable education, health care and jobs.**

• At the heart of the SDGs is a commitment to ensure that ‘no one is left behind’.

• But women and girls in developing countries are at **higher risk of being left behind**, given the fast-changing nature of digital assets and services, and their relevance for future employment and income.

• Women and girls must have access to ICTs and be empowered to create and use technology.

• How we move forward? Let’s start with **strengthening the relevance and quality of girls’ education through appropriate and innovative technology.**
• We need to focus especially on:
  1. **Skills**: i.e. equipping women with the skills – digital skills - they need to thrive in today’s economy
  2. **Access**: i.e. women’s and girls’ connectivity and access to mobile devices and frontier technologies;
  3. **Leadership**: changing gender stereotypes about women in tech industries;

• UN Women is proud to be one of the co-founders of the **Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age**, or the **EQUALS initiative**, along with
  - the International Telecommunication Union
  - GSMA
  - the International Trade Center, and
  - the United Nations University.

• **EQUALS is addresses these 3 priorities** to bridge the digital gender divide – through **3 Coalitions**: the Skills Coalition, Access Coalition and the Leadership Coalition.

• Technology can spark innovation and entrepreneurship and create new forms of public engagement and economic activity. Now more than ever, **we need targeted efforts and partnerships** to accelerate global progress in bridging the gender digital divide. Let’s make sure we deliver!