COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)

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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts in 2018 to implement the outcome of the WSIS

Submission by

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 22nd session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

UN Women Contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

PART 1

We assume that the Executive Summary will draw on the text from the other sections, and so no specific contributions are provided here.

PART 2

A brief analytical overview of trends and experiences in implementation at the national, regional and international level

- "Today, digital transformation is happening almost everywhere in the world. From cloud computing and artificial intelligence (AI), to blockchain technology, automation and the 'Internet of things' arising from smart vehicles and appliances, technological advances are transforming nearly every aspect of business. The skills to adapt to these changes are essential, as well as access to, control over and full use of technology.

- One in three internet users worldwide is under 18 years of age, and UNICEF data tells us that young people are now the most connected of all age groups. Their career paths will be very different from preceding generations. This means that education systems also need to adapt to this changing world of work and the new security aspects that accompany it. Educators and employers alike will need to embrace continuous learning on ICTs that remains up to date and relevant to career openings and the new ways in which we will all live our lives.

- The next generation will need STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) skills to be better prepared to use AI, advanced robotics, and 3D printing as well as cultivating essential 21st century skills, such as creativity, problem solving, originality, empathy, adaptation and cultural and gender awareness. Greater participation by women and girls in these areas will create a more inclusive ICT sector and drive creative change for all of us."

  (see www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/4/statement-un-women-girls-in-ict-day).

- However, despite progress in ensuring opportunities for women in ICTs and STEM fields, women and girls continue to be systematically underrepresented as users and leaders in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to ensure women's and girls' full and equal access to and participation in science education and employment.

PART 3

A brief description of Innovative policies, programmes and projects which have been undertaken by all stakeholders to implement the outcomes. Where specific targets or strategies have been set, progress in achieving those targets and strategies should be reported.

UN Women Strategic Plan

The UN Women's Strategic Plan (2018-2021) has prioritized innovation and technology as drivers of change. Through action across UN Women regional and country offices, the Strategic Plan foresees significant increase in the number of women who are connected; an increase of women who are continuously learning and are able to access education at home; people producing content that is relevant for women; and women in the labour force providing expertise and making a difference in the industry.

With the view to ensuring women's and girls' digital inclusion, digital equality and digital literacy, UN Women advocates for and celebrates women and girls in ICTs and STEM fields during the [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#) and the [International Day for Girl in ICT](#). See the 2018 video on this topic [here.](#) Promoting strengthen roles and capacity of women and girls as users and creators of innovation, UN Women is advocating for their participation in designing innovative process and solutions both professionally and in everyday life situations.

UN Women's [innovation strategy](#) calls for industry-wide action in this area, innovation and technology provide unprecedented opportunities to break trends and reach those who are the most likely to be left behind.

Partnerships

UN Women works with partners at global and country levels to close the gender digital divide and to support innovation:

- UN Women is the co-founder of [EQUALS Global Partnership](#) and works with ITU, ITC, UN University and GSMA to bridge the gender digital divide – by bridging women to tech, and tech to women (including the innovation sector) – and in so doing, enhancing the lives of millions of girls and women worldwide.

  o UN Women co-hosts the annual [EQUALS in Tech](#) competition. In 2018, 22 EQUALS in Tech Award finalists were shortlisted from over 350 nominations from 80 countries.

  o Responsible business conduct amongst tech companies, through the [Women's Empowerment Principles](#) (WEPs) - The complexity of ongoing economic and social transformations means that no sector – government, business, civil society or academia – will be able to manage these changes alone. One way of engagement is through the WEPs which offer companies, including those in digital sectors, ICT and STEAM, concrete guidance on empowering women in the workplace, marketplace and community. UN Women is looking to companies in such male-dominated sectors to step up as champions for gender equality and women's empowerment. Through the work with [EQUALS](#) (a partnership to harness the power of ICTs to accelerate global progress and close the gender digital divide) UN Women is making connections with tech companies so that they embrace the WEPs and create an inclusive workplace and market place for women in the tech sector. Example of such conversation [here](#).

  o In commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in November 2018, UN Women and the EQUALS Access Coalition developed a repository of useful resources to address women's safety concerns and bridge the gender digital divide. Online abuse is a part of gender-based violence (GBV), where information and communications technologies (ICTs) are used to threaten physical and/or sexual violence, unwanted and harassing online communications, or even encourage others to harm women and girls. More info [here](#).

- UN Women supports digital literacy and skills through its digital platforms, e.g. EmpowerWomen.org and the pilot virtual skills school, WeLearn.

- The [UN Secretary-General's Task Force on Digital Financing of the Sustainable Development Goals](#) was convened at the request of UN Secretary-General António Guterres. The Task Force represent a select group of top global leaders tasked with exploring how to harness the digitalization of financial systems to advance the SDGs (private/public and international organization), using technologies such as blockchain, big data and analytics, growth in IoT and links to data, cloud computing, AI, and mobile technology. The Task Force is co-chaired by Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations

Development Programme and Maria Ramos, Chief Executive Officer, Absa Group Limited. The goal is to be more ambitious than a consultative body; hence Task Force members will explore opportunities but will also provide critical analysis of potential pitfalls. UN Women's Executive Director is one of three members representing the UN System.

- UN Women, the Web Foundation, and the Alliance for Affordable Internet released in March 2018 at the 62nd UN Commission on the Status of Women the report on Universal Service and Access Funds: An Untapped Resource to Close the Gender Digital Divide. The research calls on governments to invest at least 50 per cent of funds collected for expanding connectivity in projects targeting women's internet access and use. UN Women is committed to working with these Funds in the countries where it has presence to support bridging the gender digital divide. The report finds that many African governments are failing to take action to connect women and other offline populations, despite the existence of funds earmarked for this purpose – an estimated US$408 million collected to expand internet access is sitting dormant in public coffers throughout Africa. The report warns that failure to use these funds to expand connectivity to all—enough to bring six million women online, or to provide digital skills training to 16 million women and girls—risks widening global inequality and undermining global development as well as widening the gender digital divide. More information here.

- The Global Innovation Coalition for Change (GICC) aims to (1) build market awareness of the potential for innovations developed by women and girls that meet the needs of women and girls; (2) identify the key barriers to women's and girls' advancement in innovation, technology and entrepreneurship; and (3) work collaboratively to identify and take actions to address these barriers and needs at an industry-wide level. Coalition members include representatives from the private sector, academia, and non-profit institutions. Aligned with the Women's Empowerment Principles, the Gender Innovation Principles were developed and launched by GCCC in 2018 to help GCCC stakeholders' fulfill the ultimate mission of promoting and championing more women and girls. The Principles aim to steer your organization both internally, in its innovation process, and externally, in establishing ways to support women and girls.

- UN Women has embarked on exploring blockchain-based intervention for better assistance to women and girls in humanitarian contexts, e.g. blockchain-enabled inter-agency collaboration, cash-based transfers, etc. During an event at UN Women Headquarters in New York, seven blockchain technology solution-providers demonstrated their solutions to over 200 UN officials, representatives from Permanent Missions to the UN, blockchain technologists, humanitarian actors and academics. UN Women focuses on developing markets for innovations that advance gender equality; integrating gender issues within innovation; promoting women as innovators and entrepreneurs; and investing directly in technology-driven innovative solutions that meet the needs of women and girls.

Programmes

Together with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and in collaboration with the African Union Commission, UN Women is implementing the African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI) to train girls in the African continent how to Code. In August 2018, more than 80 girls from across the continent came together in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for 12 days of training on coding, mentorship and life skills. The girls underwent training in gaming, animation, fashion and art, design thinking and robotics for the first week and, then choose on one specific area in which they would be assigned a project. The purpose of the initiative is to create analytical and critical skills among the girls, who would be able to solve societies problems. The African Girls Can Code Initiative is designed to cultivate personal development skills, enable for employment of girls' and women through bridging the technological divide by providing tangible programs to increase women's access to modern technology and empower the girls through access to

education and employment by proving them with first-rate ICT training. This will prepare them to contribute and participate as professionals in Africa's industrialization and growth.

Darlene Horta, participant from Cape Verde smiles at the camera during a team building session of the first Africa Girls Can Code camp held in Ethiopia. Photo: UN Women/ Faith Bwibo

The project will run from 2018-2022 and is designed to expose and equip young girls with digital literacy, coding and personal development skills. The four-year programme will train young girls to become programmers, creators and designers, placing them on track to take up educations and careers in ICT and coding. The initiative uses a "spark interest" approach, which seeks to nurture young girls to develop interest in coding and making at early stages of their career choices. Upon completion of the program, the participants are equipped with adequate knowledge and essential skills that would make them competent to forge careers in ICT. It will also equip each one with the know-how to be enterprising and gain financial security. In her message, UN Women Executive Director, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, said, "as girls who code, and I hope will remain in the sector and make a difference, we also would like you to think about how technology and the coding that you will be associated with over time is solving the big problems of the 21st century". More information [here](#).

- UN Women's **Fund for Gender Equality** has supporting the Women's Net in South Africa and Uganda (since 2016) in the area of ICT and governance. In a context of women's exclusion from decision-making in internet and ICT policies, Women's Net is increasing the capacity of women in South Africa and Uganda to discuss, analyze, respond to and influence internet governance more effectively and in support of women's rights agenda.

  Through the support of UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality, over 200 young activists have gained skills to overcome the digital divide across gender, socio-economic status, race and generations, ranging from setting up an e-mail account to using social media as advocacy and information tools to create and manage campaigns. The activities showed that free access to the internet and mobile connectivity, along with provision of digital literacy, can be a strategic tool to reduce social and gender inequalities. The trainings addressed challenges and risks related to ICT, prioritizing safety and privacy concerns.

  Over 450 women participated in 11 local dialogues to devise strategies for a "feminist Internet" and to use ICTs for feminist movement building. The dialogues drew from an interactive 2-week social media campaign of the same topics that actively engaged more than 1,400 Internet users reached 19,500.

Evidence-based policy briefs developed under this project helped articulate an agenda to advocate with authorities for the inclusion of the voices and needs of women and minorities, including LGTBIQ, in the implementation procedures of new Internet-related procedures.

UN Women collaborates with the civil society, the private sector and partners to raise awareness, advocate for action, and assess progress towards promoting connectivity, ICTs and STEAM for women and girls across the world.

- HerStory is a youth-led initiative, launched and managed by the UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS) to create a movement of writing a feminist version of history using ICTs to produce and disseminate knowledge about gender equality issues and women and girls' lives and contributions. HerStory is about recording the human experiences from a feminist perspective, emphasizing the role of women and address the absence and exclusion of women from historical records over centuries that have minimized the roles women have played in history, politics, science, technology, leadership, and religion.

  In 2016, ROAS initiated a collaboration between Wikimedia, Empower Women, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and a group of volunteers, and launched HerStory to enhance and increase the content on Wikipedia related to women and gender equality with the overall aims to raise

awareness and close the gender knowledge gap. Since its launch, HerStory organized more than 30 editathons in more than 15 cities across the world and contributed more than 3000 articles on Arabic Wikipedia through training more than 600 new editors. During HerStory editathons, the HerStory team trains volunteers to research, edit, translate, and uploaded articles about prominent women and gender issues to Arabic Wikipedia. HerStory uses ICT to facilitate crowdsourced knowledge production and collaboration between volunteers by building the technical capacity of women to be able to write their own version of history – herstory-, document the stories and contribution of women, and produce the foundational knowledge needed for the personal and career development of millions of women and girls.

Regionally, UN Women's goal for the HerStory initiative is to double the number of articles about gender and empowerment of women and girls on Wikipedia between 2018 and 2020 by editing existing articles to enhance its quality, translate featured articles from other languages, and adding new articles and photos about women and gender equality. In the Arab States, this target entails the production of 25,000 articles.

- DOKUTECH Conference is an annual technology conference in Kosovo, celebrated its 5th anniversary by bringing the conference to Pristina for the first time. The convention organized on 9 and 10 June, brought together tech executives, entrepreneurs, and top tier future talent to discuss the social implications and challenges of new technologies, including the urgent need for more female participation in this male-dominated industry. More information here.

- WikiGap initiative - Over 55 volunteers: students, recent graduates and gender experts –worked on narrowing the gender gap on Wikipedia in Macedonian language at the #WikiGap event, organised by the Swedish Embassy in the FYR Macedonia, UN Women Skopje office and the local branch of Wikipedia – Shared Knowledge in Skopje. Their work resulted in developing 103 new articles on women and gender equality issues that made a significant mark in the country. More information here and here.

Future actions or initiatives to be taken, regionally and/or internationally, and by all stakeholders, to improve the facilitation and ensure full implementation in each of action lines and themes, especially with regard to overcoming those obstacles identifies in Part Two above. You are encouraged to indicate any new commitments to further implements the outcomes.

Normative and advocacy

UN Women serves as the secretariat for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). In its sixty-second session ([CSW62](#)) in 2018, the Agreed Conclusions on "Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls" reaffirmed the commitment of Member States to close the gender digital divide:

- <u>PP 20</u> The Commission reaffirms the right to education and stresses that equal access to high quality and inclusive education contributes to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls including those in rural areas. It notes with concern the lack of progress in closing gender gaps in access to, retention in and completion of secondary and tertiary education and emphasizes the importance of technical and vocational training and lifelong learning opportunities. It recognizes that **new technologies are, inter alia, changing the structure of labour markets and provide new and different employment opportunities that require skills ranging from basic digital fluency to advanced technical skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and in information and communications technology, and in this regard, emphasizes the importance of all rural women and girls having the opportunity to acquire them.**

Member States and other stakeholders were urged to:

- <u>OP 46 (cc.)</u> Promote the economic empowerment of rural women and the transition of rural women from the informal to the formal economy by improving their skills, productivity and employment opportunities including through technical, agricultural, fisheries and vocational training, including **their financial and digital literacy** and facilitate the entry and re-entry of all rural women, especially young women, into the labour force;

- <u>OP 46 (pp.)</u> Address the **digital divide**, which disproportionately affects rural women and girls, by facilitating their access to ICT and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education to promote their empowerment and to develop skills, information and knowledge that are needed to support their labour market entry, livelihoods, well-being and resilience and expand the scope of ICT-enabled mobile learning and literacy training while promoting a safe and **secure cyberspace** for women and girls;

- <u>OP 46 (ppp.)</u> Develop and implement policies and strategies that promote rural women's and girls' participation in and access to the media and information and communications technologies (ICTs), including by increasing their **digital literacy and access to information**.

UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, represented UN Women on the G7 Canadian Presidency's Gender Equality Advisory Council, and contributed weekly to the Council's recommendations (for the full set of recommendations: "[Make Gender Inequality History: Recommendations from the Gender Equality Council for Canada's G7 Presidency](#)"). For example, the Council recommended three key areas of action to be taken by the G7 in the area of "innovative and productive":

- Rec 46: Ensure girls and women reap the benefits of digital transformation.

- Rec 47: Ensure that AI technologies are gender-responsive and do not reproduce existing gender biases.

- Rec 48: Recognize and address the role that the 'data in exchange for services' commercial model that currently characterizes digital networks and technologies plays in shaping the labour environment in ways that maintain and sustain gender inequality and discrimination.

Recommendations were also highlighted in other areas focusing on the planet and climate change.

The entire set of recommendations was fed into the Charlevoix G7 Summit Communique, including its visions, commitments and declarations. In the section of the Communique on **Jobs of the Future**, G7 leaders committed to:

- We are resolved to ensure that all workers have access to the skills and education necessary to adapt and prosper in the new world of work brought by **innovation** through emerging **technologies**. We will promote innovation through a culture of lifelong learning among current and future generations of workers. We will expand market-driven training and education, **particularly for girls and women in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)** fields.

Strong commitments were also made to end sexual and gender-based violence, abuse and harassment in digital contexts and the Leaders of the G7 committed to 10 action areas to address these issues.

During her engagement with the Canadian G7 Presidency, UN Women's Executive Director emphasized the importance of digital knowledge in the changing world of work. Link to the interview here.

"*To prepare women and girls for both current job market shifts and the changes yet to come, it is essential to promote inclusivity in innovation and the future of work. This is going to take close cooperation and dialogue among policy-makers, social partners, the private sector, education and training providers, innovation analysts and other relevant actors. These are priorities that were identified during the G7 meeting of Ministers of Labour and Employment in Turin in September 2017. Canada's 2018 G7 Presidency has identified three key priority themes related to this agenda: investing in growth that works for everyone, preparing for jobs of the future, and advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women, together with the EU and ILO, has just kicked off the WE EMPOWER programme in G7 countries that will support the agenda's implementation. … The G7 has a critical role to play in ensuring that women and girls can access the skills and training needed to adapt to the challenges and opportunities that technology brings, so that the future of work is rooted in gender equality and economic opportunities, arrangements and protections that work for all people*." See full article here (pp 34-35).

- UN Women issued a first report on Gender Equality and Big Data, outlining how big data can complement traditional data to monitor implementation of the SDGs. The report outlines the value of big data (organic, unstructured data) for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in relation to women. It presents the benefits of big data (for example, real time data), risks (for example, elite capture and privacy), and policy implications (for example, how it can be incorporated in project cycles from planning to evaluation). It ends with a compendium of gender-related big data projects and their relevance to the SDGs.