COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)

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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2023 to implement the outcomes 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 27th 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 WSIS Report 2023

The 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

The sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) took place from 6 to 17 March 2023 and considered the priority theme of *"Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls"*. It was the first time the Commission – the UN's largest annual gathering on gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls and their human rights – covered this theme, which is extremely relevant to WSIS and has many connections with its Action Lines. The preparation and negotiation of CSW67 gave the opportunity for extra engagement of UN agencies working on technology and innovation throughout the CSW process and to ensure linkages between CSW67 and other relevant UN processes and programmes, in accordance with their respective areas of expertise and mandates.

The agreed conclusions adopted by Member States provide a blueprint for all stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, civil society and youth to promote the full and equal participation and leadership of women and girls in the design, transformation and integration of digital technologies and innovation processes that fulfill the human rights and needs of women and girls. CSW67 reaffirmed the importance of women and girls' full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in science, technology and innovation, and expressed concern on the limited progress in closing the gender gap in access to and use of technologies, connectivity, digital literacy and education. It also expressed grave concern about the continuity and interrelation between offline and online violence, harassment and discrimination against women and girls and condemned the increase of such acts. The Commission called for significantly increased public and private sector investments to bridge the gender digital divide, more inclusive innovation eco-systems, and the promotion of safe and gender-responsive technology and innovation. It also called for inclusive and equitable quality education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, information and communications technology and digital literacy to ensure that all women and girls can thrive in a rapidly changing world.

The agreed conclusions include ambitious and actionable recommendations and advises that initiatives aiming to promote innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality consider the following:

- Develop digital tools and services to address the needs of all women and girls, across sectors and geographies, especially for their education, health, economic empowerment and engagement in public life, and ensure women and girls have access to digital literacy and skills throughout their life course.
- Mainstream gender in digital policies to remove barriers to equal access for all women and girls, including those living in poverty, in rural, maritime or remote areas, with disabilities, Indigenous women and girls, migrant women and girls, and older women.
- Foster a policy of zero tolerance for gender-based violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology and ensure that public and private sector entities prioritize its prevention and elimination.
- Mainstream a gender perspective in the design of emerging technologies and adopt regulations to ensure they are subject to adequate safeguards to combat new risks, gender stereotypes and negative social norms, data privacy breaches and improve transparency and accountability.
- Promote policies and programmes to achieve gender parity in emerging scientific and technological fields and create supportive workplaces and education settings, including through

gender-responsive education, distance learning solutions and interdisciplinary approaches combining the teaching of social sciences and scientific fields.

- Develop gender-responsive innovation that challenges gender stereotypes and negative social norms, including through the development of digital content, awareness campaigns and teaching competencies for positive engagement on digital technologies that engage, educate, encourage and empowers youth, including young men and boys, to become agents of change for gender equality.

The Generation Equality Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality

CSW67 and the Global Digital Compact (GDC) present a seismic opportunity to catapult the Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation's goal into action by stakeholders at the international, national, regional, and local levels. At UNGA-77, the leaders of the Action Coalition called to make sure the values and objectives of Generation Equality are reflected in the recommendations of CSW67 and the GDC, to promote the regulation of new technologies based on human-rights and non-discrimination, the fair distribution of their benefits and their utilization for the common good. UNGA-78 was the occasion to reiterate this call and launch a collective effort to foster collaborations, build capacity and knowledge, and shape a Global Digital Compact that breaks the cycle of digital inequality and identifies ambitious and concrete targets and evidence-based actions that can be catalytic in achieving gender equality and eliminating the digital gender gap.

In his report to the CSW67, UN Secretary-General Guterres called for ensuring that the Global Digital Compact advances women's rights and builds a human-centred approach to digital transformation. In the Policy Brief on GDC, the UNSG proposes to mainstream gender in digital policies and in technology design and ensuring zero tolerance for gender-based violence (GBV), in order to create a more equal and connected world for women and girls. This calls for pro-active efforts from the international multistakeholder community to ensure gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality are central to all themes and objectives of the GDC, in order to:
- bridge digital divides and address the gender dimensions of digital inequality
- ensure digital technologies are created and used in a manner that respects human rights, including through appropriate protections against arbitrary and unlawful interference with privacy, including in the context of the protection of personal data, and strengthening accountability for discrimination and addressing misleading content
- expand women's participation in the technology sector and digital policymaking
- prevent digital technologies from reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes and technology-facilitated GBV, to make digital spaces safe, inclusive and accessible for all women and girls. It requires prioritizing the principles of inclusivity, fairness, universality, transparency and accountability and adopting human rights-based approach and effective safeguards that prevent inequalities, biases and abusive behaviours towards women and girls.

Lessons learned and results from policies and programmes implemented during the reporting period

Technology-Facilitated Gender based Violence (TFGBV)

UN Women is supporting countries in expanding and amending legal frameworks on TFGBV, as well as enhancing government actors' knowledge to handle adequate reporting, the collection of evidence and law enforcement. In China, UN Women has support women's right organizations to conduct a situational analysis on Cyberspace gender-based violence, which highlighted the lack of gender-disaggregated data

on the analysis of cyberspace violence cases and the need to develop national guidance for internet service providers and establish a multi-sectoral coordination mechanism. Subsequently, the Cyberspace Administration has issued a Notice on Strengthening the Governance of Cyberspace violence, which indicate national commitment on ending Cyberspace violence.

In Mexico, in addition to the 2021 amendment to federal laws to define and sanction digital violence against women (which included a six-year sentence for sharing non-consensual images depicting sexual content), thirty Mexican states (out of 32) have included different forms of online violence and abuse in their principal laws on ending violence against women and girls. Mexico's National Institute on Statistics and Geography has also incorporated and updated items and improved data collection on "digital violence" in the most recent national survey on violence against women and girls. UN Women is working closely with government partners to continue strengthen and harmonize global and regional standards and legislation. In Ecuador, UN women is supporting the Ministry of the Interior in the development of a mobile digital application to facilitate the work of administrative authorities in granting Administrative Measures of Immediate Protection and that of the National Police for the execution of urgent actions to protect women victims of violence.

Given the increased impact of TFGBV on peacebuilding efforts and promote sustainable peace and democracy, UN Women has also been implementing new programmes in this area. In Tanzania, UN Women has been supporting the inclusion of digitalization in the Tanzania first National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 development process while strengthening this component within the review of the National Gender Policy in Tanzania Mainland. This included raising-awareness through the organization of a Webinar on Advancing Women Peace and Security in the Digital Space, a series of educational outreaches in secondary schools, the diffusion of radio programmes in communities with specific focus on the positive use of social media and digital platforms to promote social cohesion and peace at family and community level, raising awareness on the risks for disinformation and online sexual and gender-based violence. In Asia and the Pacific Region, UN Women is collaborating with the United Nations University Institute in Macau to look into how artificial intelligence technologies could be used to support gender-sensitive or gender-transformative peacebuilding.

In Moldova, UN Women piloted a methodology to engage print, online and broadcast media in a process of self-assessment of their coverage from a gender perspective. In the Western Balkan Region, UN Women is collaborated with UNDP, UNFPA and UNESCO to empower young individuals to take a stand against hate speech and cultivate a safer digital environment. In Mexico, UN Women is working with UNICC and Universitat Politècnica de València to use a language model through an intersectional lens to detect and address gender-based discrimination in digital spaces, such as identifying and addressing sexist messaging on social media platforms.

Women entrepreneurship, the digitalization of MSMEs and Digital Solutions for women's economic empowerment

UN Women has been implementing programmes to support women entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs to enhance their knowledge and digital skills, provide mentorship opportunities and build more inclusive innovation ecosystems. In Moldova, UN Women helped establish a Business Academy with Business Pre-accelerators and Accelerators, and vocational trainings that are adaptive and hybrid. This included a training program "Women in Online Work", a mentorship program and basic IT/computer skills trainings for refugee women. In Chile, UN Women is implementing the Originarias Program which strengthen the digital capacities of indigenous women entrepreneurs. In China, UN Women works with the International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges and the Ministry of Women Empowerment to equip women with knowledge and digital skills to enhance their access to markets and

financial services. UN Women also published a [multi-country study on women led MSMEs in China, Indonesia, Rwanda, Thailand, and Uganda](#) which includes recommendations to enhance women entrepreneurs' digital inclusion and access to traditional and tech-enabled markets and finance.

UN Women has also been implementing programmes to leverage digital technology to advance women's economic empowerment by enhancing agricultural productivity and market access. UN Women continued to support the development and implementation of gender-responsive open-source cloud-based business and e-commerce platform, including "*Creadoras*" which is a virtual space that aims to enhance the economic empowerment opportunities of women entrepreneurs in Ecuador, "*Hecho por Mujeres"* an e-commerce platform that connects women entrepreneurs and businessowners to consumers under a business-to-consumer model in Costa Rica and "Buy from Women" a similar platform implementing in Liberia which has bolstered financial inclusion and help overcome limitations imposed by traditional banking infrastructure.

In Tanzania, UN Women, in partnership with UNFPA, supported local government authorities and women farmers in rural areas to harness digital solutions in facilitating farm business data and record-keeping, timely agronomic updates and information, and real time market update through the use of basic tablets and digital application in partnership with value chain actors. They also demonstrated the capacity to modernize land demarcation practices with advanced technology and a gender-responsive approach, by equipping the local government authorities with a digital land use management system and IT infrastructure, as evidenced by the issuance of 5,360 Certificates of Customary Rights of Occupancy in six months, with over 2,000 issued to women. In China, UN Women and FAO jointly published research titled "Providing Innovative and Gender-responsive Digital Support to smallholder farmers In China", which analyses the impact of digital technologies on rural women as a step towards a broader discussion on how digital finance and e-commerce could empower them to achieve better livelihoods.

Increasing women and girls' access to and use of digital technology

UN Women implemented several initiatives to increase capacities on digital literacy and creating a conducive environment for young women to enter the technology sector. In Pakistan, UN Women started a provincial mapping of IT-related skills that are in demand and in need to identify targeted action to enable youth from each area to partake in the digital economy. Through its partnership with Pakistan's largest network operator, Jazz, UN Women has also empowered over 3,000 women micro-entrepreneurs digitally through the provision of SIM cards, affordable internet access, and financial inclusion through Cash Wallets.

In Georgia, UN Women provided free training for 1,000 women, including a large number of women displaced by the war in Ukraine, in popular IT professions in collaboration with Business and Technology University and partner ICT companies. In Uzbekistan, the government has announced a new commitment to the Action Coalition on Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality to train 1.5 million women and girls in digital and review the existing Strategy "Digital Uzbekistan - 2030" with a gender and disability lens, including investing in gender and disability indicators and financial means for implementation.

In Liberia, UN Women has established Women's Digital Centres in community peace huts to provide digital literacy training to young women and has joined forces with the Central Bank of Liberia to facilitate the transition of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to digital platforms. Finally, ITU and UN Women published a study on the gender digital divide in Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries to better understand trends is participation of girls and women in the ICT sector and its dynamics, while analyzing the women's participation in the digital world, which provides country-specific recommendations to develop a set of national initiatives fostering participation of women and girls in the ICT sector.