

# **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 2024 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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.

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## UN Women WSIS Report 2024

### **The Global Digital Compact**

In 2024, UN Women has taken a decisive step to ensure gender equality remains a priority in the global digital discourse through its position paper, "[\*Placing Gender Equality at the Heart of the Global Digital Compact: Taking forward the recommendations of the sixty seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women\*](#)". The paper underscores the urgent need to address systemic inequalities and create an inclusive digital landscape as part of the United Nations' broader efforts to develop a Global Digital Compact (GDC) in annex to the Pact of the Future.

The GDC aims to establish shared principles for the digital future. By positioning gender equality at the core of this dialogue, UN Women's advocacy ensured that digital transformation benefits everyone, particularly women and girls who remain disproportionately excluded from digital opportunities.

In particular, the paper helped identify the following priorities:

- Frame digital inclusion as a gender equality imperative and identify gender-based disparities in digital access, skills, and leadership. The position paper presents actionable recommendations to close these gaps, emphasizing that digital inclusion is essential for achieving global development goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Advocate for gender-responsive digital policies and call for governments, private sector actors, and civil society organizations to adopt policies and practices that promote equitable digital ecosystems.
- Advocate for equal participation and leadership of women in technology development, digital policy-making, and governance structures. A central theme of the position paper is the call for governments and the private sector to promote women's representation in tech industries, STEM education, and decision-making roles related to the digital future.
- Promote safe digital environments and recognize the growing prevalence of technology-facilitated gender-based violence in digital spaces. The position paper advocates for measures to protect women and girls and call for stronger legislation, reporting mechanisms, and technological innovations to ensure safe and empowering online environments.
- Leverage data for gender equality and highlight the importance of collecting and utilizing sex-disaggregated data to better understand and address gender disparities in digital access and use. The paper advocates for ethical and transparent data practices to amplify marginalized voices.
- Ensuring gender-responsive artificial intelligence (AI), recognizing the transformative potential and risks of AI. The position paper advocates for AI systems to be designed and deployed with gender equality at their core to avoid perpetuating or exacerbating biases, ensure diverse representation in training datasets, and reinforce transparency and accountability.

The position paper has informed member states' positions on gender equality within the GDC framework and raised awareness of the intersection between gender equality and digital transformation among diverse stakeholders. Through this initiative, UN Women is setting a precedent for inclusive policy-making in the digital age and ensuring that gender equality remains central to digital transformation discussions.

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

The ACT&I collaborated with CSO partners to organize several advocacy events on the importance of prioritizing and mainstreaming gender in the GDC. It included a side event at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Kyoto where participants agreed upon a set of [\*Principles for the Inclusion of Gender in the\*](#)

[Global Digital Compact](#). It also included a workshop and side event at CSW69 co-hosted with Association for Progressive Communications, UNFPA, Alliance for Universal Digital Rights, Equality Now, Pollicy, Derechos Digitales, UN Women and ACT&I Leaders and Commitment Makers, Digital Rights Foundation and World Wide Web Foundation. The event “Women’s Rights and Choices in a Digital World: Why We Need a Feminist Global Digital Compact”, was convened with support from the governments of Brazil, Denmark, Finland, and the United States. Finally, it included a side event at UNGA79 to create a Civil Society Strategic Discussion Space with more than 60 CSO representatives, to critically discuss the final text and engage in a strategic discussion around the implementation and follow-up of the GDC.

In November 2023, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan organized a Generation Equality Regional Midpoint event, themed “Accelerating digitalization in Europe and Central Asia: Partnerships on innovation and technology for women’s economic empowerment”. Around 80 government representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, alongside leading private sector organizations, civil society organizations, academia representatives, and youth activists gathered in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on November 15 to review progress and bolster existing commitments.

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

#### ***Technology-Facilitated Gender based Violence (TFGBV)***

Women’s Political Participation team developed and deployed global training tool on violence against women in elections or politics. One of the key components of the trainings included issues related to online violence in elections and strategies for response. It was deployed in country offices that were and are preparing for elections targeting a wide range of electoral stakeholders - police, CSOs, justice sector, EMBs and other constitutional commissions, political parties.

UN Women Regional Office for East and Southern Africa took part in the regional processes and consultation to develop the Election Management Bodies Principles and Guidelines for the use of digital and social media in elections in Africa. This work was spearheaded by the Electoral Commission of South Africa. It included advocacy to ensure that TFGBV is taken into consideration in normative frameworks and preventative activities prior to elections.

UN Women Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality and UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific facilitated a Training and Cross-country Exchange to empower Youth to Address Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence. In partnership with the eSafety Commissioner of Australia, they also organized three interactive workshops for ending gender-based violence advocates and practitioners aimed to improve survivor-centred and trauma-informed essential services provisions for survivors of TFGBV.

#### ***Digital Inclusion***

UN Women Regional Office for East and Southern Africa partnered with the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to create: 1) A [status report on financial inclusion of women](#), which includes the access to and use of technology for financial inclusion. 2) A toolkit aimed at standardizing indicators and measurement frameworks for gender and financial inclusion. 89 officials from 15 SADC member states were trained in July and the toolkit with standard measured will be made available to member states to use and reference as they conduct financial inclusion surveys on women entrepreneurship, the digitalization of MSMEs and digital solutions for women's economic empowerment.

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

In Tanzania, the African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI)/Binti Digitali (Digital Girl) addressed the gender digital divide through a multi-sectoral collaboration with Ministries of Gender, Education, and Information, Communication and Technology. Partnership with the private sector provided internet connectivity in learning and coding centers, enabling seamless access to online resources and tools, and practical skills to promote digital solutions. As a result, more than 110 girls were equipped with vital digital skills and tools, including in coding, digital marketing, and graphic design. The initiative supported girls to develop meaningful digital solutions that respond to highly relevant issues within their communities. The new technical skills and expansion of entrepreneurial capacities opened avenues for income generation and economic empowerment.

In Uganda, UN Women supported women and girls in STEM fields through 1,500 scholarships and mindset change initiatives and the implementation of the Digital Transformation Roadmap (DTR) 2023-2027, including targeting 50% digital literacy for women by 2027 and investment of \$10 million in gender-responsive research and innovation.

### ***Women, Peace and Security***

UN Women and UN University Institute in Macau jointly undertook a research on ['Artificial Intelligence and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in South-East Asia'](#). This research examines the opportunities and risks of AI from a women, peace and security (WPS) lens in South-East Asia, with a focus on four types of gender biases in AI which will need to be addressed before the region can fully benefit from new technological developments: discrimination, stereotyping, exclusion and insecurity.

Its objective is to inform governments, policy makers, international organizations, civil society organisations and the private sector interested in AI in the region on the risks and opportunities which these technologies bear, addressing an important gap in understanding on this issue.

The research finds two dimensions to improving the dynamics of AI and the WPS agenda in the region. The first is mitigating the risks of AI systems to advancing the WPS agenda, especially on social media, but also on other tools, such as chatbots and mobile applications. The second is fostering the development of AI tools built explicitly to support gender-responsive peace in line with WPS commitments.

The recommendations suggest to:

- Mainstream WPS considerations in national, regional and global dialogues on AI governance, and vice versa.
- Support the design of inclusive, conflict-sensitive and gender-responsive AI by ensuring that women have equal opportunities to lead and meaningfully participate in said processes.
- Map and conduct gender- and human rights impact assessments of AI systems and draft policies and legislation, including those relevant to the advancement of peace and security.
- Raise awareness and strengthen capacities of key stakeholders on risks and opportunities of AI tools for gender-responsive conflict prevention and peace efforts.
- Leverage AI for hate-speech monitoring, fact-checking and countering disinformation on social media, accounting for the use of misogynistic and otherwise harmful gendered narratives.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms for social media companies by enhancing users' agency in choice of providers and platforms, with specific attention to inclusive and rights-based solutions.