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| **Agenda item: PL 2** | **Document C24/93-E** |
| **21 May 2024** |
| **Original: English** |
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| Contribution by the United States of America | |
| THEME FOR WTPF | |
| **Purpose**  This contribution proposes “gender equality and mainstreaming” as the theme for the next World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (WTPF).  **Action required by the Council**  Council is invited to **decide** on “gender equality and mainstreaming” as the theme for the next WTPF.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [*Document C24/6*](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/24/cl/c/S24-CL-C-0006!!MSW-E.docx)  [*ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 2 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022)*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-002-E.pdf)  [*ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 70 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022)*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-070-E.pdf) | |

**Background**

ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 2 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) resolves to hold the World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (WTPF) and instructs ITU Council to decide on the duration, date, venue, agenda and themes of any future WTPF.

**Proposal**

The next WTPF should focus on the theme of “gender equality and mainstreaming,” a topic that is urgent, timely, and reflective of previous commitments made by ITU membership.

Document [C24/6](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0006/en) outlines important achievements towards addressing the gender digital divide; however, it also highlights a persistent and concerning gap:

“Facts and Figures 2023 reports women and girls still account for a disproportionate share of the global offline population, outnumbering male non-users by 17 per cent. In terms of phone ownership, women are 8 per cent less likely to own a mobile phone than men, and outnumbering men non-owners by 35%. *The significance of this problem cannot be understated* as it perpetuates inequalities and hinders women’s and girls’ opportunities for education, employment, and participation in the digital economy. Bridging this gap is essential for promoting gender equality, fostering economic empowerment, and ensuring inclusive development in the digital age.” (Emphasis added.)

As document C24/6 notes, ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 70 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) “specifically focuses on gender equality with a clear and formal commitment to integrating a gender perspective into the organization’s work and activities,” which undoubtedly includes the WTPF.

By dedicating the WTPF to the topic of gender equality and mainstreaming, ITU Members can make continued progress towards the implementation of Resolution 70. WTPF presents a valuable opportunity to develop common viewpoints on bridging the gender digital divide by empowering girls and women in achieving equal access and use of digital technologies, digital skills, and opportunities as ICT leaders.

Notably, Resolution 70 resolves to continue the ITU’s work to promote gender equality in telecommunications/ICTs by recommending measures at the international, regional and national level on policies and programmes that improve socio-economic conditions for women and girls, particularly in developing countries. According to data from the ITU Gender Dashboard, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) face the greatest challenges in achieving digital gender parity. As Resolution 2 emphasizes, the WTPF should give special attention to the interests and needs of developing countries, which makes the proposed topic all the more relevant and necessary.

This topic also aligns with the decision in Resolution 2 to hold the WTPF “preferably back-to-back with the WSIS Forum.” WSIS Forum features a special track on ICTs and gender mainstreaming. The WTPF can provide a complementary venue for ITU membership to address challenges with the implementation of the WSIS outcomes in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (gender equality).

In short, as document C24/6 concludes: “Closing the gender digital divide and delivering on ITU’s mandate for gender equality amidst the increasingly pervasive digital landscape requires a more concerted effort from across ITU and its membership.”

We fully support this conclusion and believe that holding a WTPF on the critical topic of gender equality and mainstreaming would prove a vital step forward.

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