

## **ITU WRS-2020 Launch of Network of Women for WRC23**

*Virtual event*

**30 November 2020**

***Opening Remarks***

**Mario Maniewicz**  
**Director, Radiocommunication Bureau**

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Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning/good afternoon/good evening to you all and thank you so much for joining us for this important event where we kick-off the Network of Women for WRC23.

This launch is a fulfilment of our commitment to implement the concrete actions in the WRC-19 Gender Declaration that seeks to promote and entrench gender equality, equity and parity within the Radiocommunication Sector.

The aim of this initiative is to encourage a larger participation of women in our meetings and conferences, to support women delegates when they take on new roles in the ITU as chairs, and vice-chairs, and to grow the ITU women's community, capacity, and contribution.

Over the last decade, ITU has made progress in raising awareness on gender issues, in increasing women's participation and contribution through various gender mainstreaming policies and resolutions to empower women and Girls. Yet, despite our effort, at WRC-19 the participation of women was only 18 %. We clearly have a long way to go and it is my earnest hope that the Network of Women for WRC23 will take on this challenge boldly.

Earlier this year, and as a follow-up to the implementation of the WRC-19 Gender Declaration, the Radiocommunication Advisory Group established a Correspondence Group on Gender, to consider an appropriate course of action to initiate and implement the provisions of the WRC-19 Gender Declaration prior to the next Radiocommunication Assembly (RA-23).

The meeting endorsed the appointment of Mrs. Lucia Luisa La Franceschina of Italy as the Chairman of the Correspondence Group and Mrs. Olfa Jammeli of Tunisia as its Vice Chairman.

Furthermore, taking into account the critical roles played by the Regional Telecommunication Organizations in the preparations for WRCs, the NOW4WRC23 will expand to include activities at the regional level and will be led by its new Regional Co-Chairs. This will expand the programs reach and ensure that the initiative addresses the specific needs of women in each Region.

Towards this end, I have seized every opportunity to encourage the Regional Groups to take into account the guidance of the Gender Declaration as they structure their preparatory activities for this new study cycle. The appointment of women in leading roles in the Regional Groups is an important step towards increasing their leadership at the International level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2020 has been a difficult year for all of us due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it has been especially challenging for vulnerable populations, including women. Many have been in the forefront of response teams and uniquely susceptible to infection. Many have been striving to deal with the devastating economic impact of the pandemic and others have been juggling fulltime teleworking and a new family life with children being home during the day and attending their classes online.

Yet, this pandemic could also be the catalyst needed to change the current gender statistics for attendance in meetings in the ITU-R Study Groups and their Working Parties. We must seize this opportunity to turn the tide and accelerate women's ongoing participation in the work of the ITU-R.

As more and more people work remotely, there is a greater awareness of the challenge women professionals face. Moreover, while participating from home in virtual meetings we are increasingly aware of the intertwined roles we all play as professionals, parents, and caregivers.

I see the Radiocommunication Sector benefiting immensely from gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women through ICT.

Several studies have shown that traditionally feminine leadership attributes such as empathy, listening, communicating, collaborating, and searching for consensus-driven decisions, have been fundamental to deal with the crisis.

And I believe these skills, which we need in both male and female leaders, will be ever more important moving forward.

This is why I reaffirm my commitment to accelerate progress on gender equality, equity and parity and I count on your engagement as Member States, Sector Members and Academia to support the Network of Women for WRC-23 in its endeavour to promote the inclusion of women in all aspects of ITU-R activities, at national, regional and international levels.

I thank you very much and I now declare the Network of Women for WRC23 officially launched.