

WSIS GENDER CAUCUS STATEMENT TO THE WSIS INTERSESSIONAL IN PARIS

Presented by Conchita Poncini (IFUW)
On behalf of the WSIS Gender Caucus

I am Conchita Poncini, President, NGO Committee on the Status of Women. I speak today on behalf of the WSIS Gender Caucus, a multi-stakeholder group of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, parliaments and national governments, working to integrate gender issues in the WSIS process.

We welcome the WSIS as an effective means in fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals. This is an event that can have crucial gender equality implications since women, particularly in developing countries, often do not get opportunities to make a contribution to debates on Information Society. Hence, the critical importance of ensuring that there is a process of participatory development, gender equity and inclusion of empowerment principles in bridging the digital divide.

As half of the world's population, women are both vectors and agents of change. We have legitimate rights to self-expression and equal access to an information society that is relevant and affordable to all women. Governments should integrate gender perspectives and ensure women's participation from the conceptual stage of developing and implementing national policies, legislation, regulatory and technical instruments in ICTs, and programmes and projects.

We urge the governments to include the following in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action:

1. Acknowledgement of gender equality and women's rights as a cross-cutting principle. Inclusion of women as leaders and decision-makers in all planning processes for the Summit and recognition that women's perspectives can make a significant contribution to aligning the Summit with the Millennium Development Goals;
2. Facilitation and encouragement of women as members of national delegations and representatives of civil society and business by setting targets for delegations to include at least 30% women including gender and ICT experts;
3. Inclusion in the theme of applications - design of ICT projects which take women's needs into account, for example by developing technology solutions suited to young people, rural women, women in conflict areas, and applications that assist in the eradication of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the needs of women with disabilities;

4. Development of projects which will collect and analyze appropriate gender specific data and set up reporting mechanisms to evaluate and monitor the impact of ICT developments on women and girls;
5. Implementation of an information dissemination campaign on WSIS that includes a wide range of media such as radio, drama and print and a variety of languages;
6. Commissioning of a study on the interaction between gender equality and ICT, which should include development of a gender equality and ICT baseline, indicators, conceptual tools and case studies on the impact of ICT on achieving gender equality, which would inform dialogue on the Summit.

Finally, the governments should take into account the agreed conclusions of the UN 47th Session of the Committee on the Status of Women on access and participation in ICTs, and their impact and use as tools for women's empowerment.

We endorse Canada's position on the amendment to Para 11 of the Preamble, and urge other governments to support the same.

We have also heard the strong endorsements of the centrality and non-negotiability of gender equality and empowerment by the Civil Society Working Group on Themes and Content, and the Asia Pacific Caucus.

In partnership with ITU and UNIFEM, the Gender Caucus is working with national governments to organize WSIS gender programmes in their respective countries. The Gender Caucus Sourcebook, which can be found at the WSIS Gender Caucus website www.genderwsis.org/sourcebook, is a useful resource for organizing national gender and ICT activities.

We are also available to you at this Intersessional in fine-tuning the text to ensure gender equality in the Information Society.

Thank you Chairperson

16 July 2003

WSIS GENDER CAUCUS

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