Statement and Suggestions by the WSIS Gender Caucus concerning the Revised Chapter Two of the Operational Part as Proposed from the Chairman of the Sub-Committee (Addendum 1(Rev.1) to Document WSIS-II/PC-2/DOC/3-E) February 22, 2005

The Gender Caucus is deeply concerned that the document does not contain any references to gender equality and women's empowerment. We cannot consider Chapter Two of the Operational Part finalized until our concerns are addressed. Our recommended language is inserted in bold letters below. We consider paragraphs 17, 19A and 21 of particular importance.

14. We recognise the existence of the digital divide and the challenges that this poses for many countries, which are forced to choose between many competing demands for development funds whilst having limited resources. **We also recognize the existence of a gender digital divide and the potential of ICTs to reduce gender inequalities**. We recognise the scale of the problem in bridging the digital divide, which will require adequate, sustainable and predictable investments in ICT infrastructure and services, and capacity building, and transfer of technology, over many years to come.

New 14A. We call for digital solidarity as we recognise that the issue of financing is at the core of all development discussions, and because adequate financial resources are an indispensable ingredient for alleviating poverty, ~~and~~ securing sustainable development **and thus bridging the gender digital divide.**

15. We agree that the financing of ICT for development needs to be placed in the context of the growing importance of the role of ICTs, not only as a medium of communication, but also as a development enabler **for both women and men**, and as a tool for the achievement of the development goals of the Millennium Declaration.

17. We note that this investment has had to greatest development impact where ICT markets have been opened, based on a sound regulatory framework, and private sector participation has been encouraged and where public policies aimed at bridging the digital divide have been implemented. We should however acknowledge that, left to itself, private sector investment has only gone to areas that are perceived as lucrative and profitable, **and not to important goals such as gender equality and democracy**, and this has not had the desired effect of bringing inclusive development and access for everyone.

New 19A. We are also aware that a market-friendly framework needs to be accompanied by a dynamic and fair international policy environment, socially responsible **and gender-equal** business practices and due consideration to local skilled labour resources.

20 We note that, of late, the majority of financing of ICT infrastructure and services has come from the private sector and that North-South flows are increasingly being augmented by South-South ~~cooperation~~ **partnership** and domestic financing.

21. We recognize that, as a result of the growing importance of sustainable private sector investment in infrastructure, multilateral and bilateral public donors are redirecting public resources to policy reforms and other development needs, including the mainstreaming of ICTs in the development sectors. Nevertheless, we encourage multilateral institutions and bilateral public donors to consider also providing more financial support for regional and large-scale national ICT infrastructure projects and related capacity development, **especially for women**. They should consider aligning their aid and partnership strategies with the priorities set by developing countries in their national development strategies including, where appropriate, their poverty reduction strategies.

22. Although there are many different funding mechanisms for ICTs for Development, we note that investment funds are often insufficient, **notably for women**, and even when financing is available, it does not always correspond to **their** needs.

26. We recommend improvement and innovations in existing financing mechanisms to be implemented by 200X, including **creative financial investment schemes and facilities which do not restrict women only to micro credit, the allocation of targeted funds for women in ICTs and the involvement of Development Banks at national and international levels.**

New 26a1 b. Coordinating programmes among governments and major financial players to stimulate **gender-balanced** investments in less attractive rural and low-income market segments;

New 26a1 d. Establishment of a “virtual” financing facility to leverage multiple sources in support of identified investment objectives in key locations (notably broadband, rural and regional projects, and capacity building **to bridge the gender divide).**