ITU's new Gender Equality & Mainstreaming Policy (GEM)

Adopted by ITU Council at its 2013 session

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1. Preamble

As the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs), ITU's overall mission is "Connecting the World". In this context, including a gender perspective in ITU's work is essential to ensure that the benefits of ICTs are made available to all women and men on a fair and equitable basis.

2. Purpose

This policy presents a shared vision for integrating a gender perspective throughout the Union. It provides a tool to ensure that gender equality remains a core consideration in ITU's strategic plans, activities and programmes. This policy also outlines an accountability mechanism to ensure oversight and achievement of results and an action plan to be developed and reviewed periodically.

3. Scope

The implementation of the Gender Equality & Mainstreaming (GEM) Policy is led by the Secretary-General and the elected officials. It applies to all staff members at headquarters and field offices.

4. Rationale

The GEM policy builds on the following resolutions: Resolution 70 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010), WTDC Resolution 55 (Doha, 2006), and WTSA Resolution 55 (Rev. Dubai, 2012). ITU has also endorsed the UN system-wide policy on gender equality and the UN System Wide Action Plan (UN SWAP) on gender equality and women's empowerment. Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women is in line with ITU's mission to connect the world. This implies incorporating a gender perspective in the implementation of all the programmes and plans of the Union. ITU also recognizes that gender equality helps foster a more creative and effective organization which is linked to increased productivity and innovation. To lead by example, ITU commits to applying the same concepts within its own organization.

5. Policy

VISION STATEMENT ITU's vision is to become a model organization for gender equality, and to leverage the power of ICTs to empower both women and men.

OBJECTIVES To fulfil this vision, the GEM policy aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Achieve gender equality within ITU to allow both women and men to equally contribute to and participate in the work of the organization;

- Develop policies, programmes, projects and knowledge-building activities that allow for both women and men to equally benefit from ICTs, and hence help reduce inequalities;

- Strengthen institutional arrangements for gender mainstreaming and to review the Union's delivery mechanisms to integrate gender issues more effectively.

- Provide an accountability framework for gender equality and an internal monitoring and reporting mechanism in accordance with the requirements of the UN-SWAP.

OPERATIONALIZATION In relation to the above objectives, this policy commits ITU to take actions focusing on the following areas:

a) Organizational Culture and Staffing
The GEM policy proactively commits ITU to promoting an inclusive workplace and to nurture a gender-friendly working environment by:

- Implementing measures aimed at significantly improving gender parity at all levels and in each sector, including ensuring accountability among recruitment decision-makers;

- Ensuring a gender-sensitive approach in applying HR policies and practices including in recruitment and staff development;

- Taking appropriate measures to enhance respect for diversity;

- Fostering a participative culture that values the contribution of each staff member, whether female or male;

- Promoting inclusive decision-making processes and management styles; and

- Enhancing flexible work arrangements and career paths.

b) Programmes, Activities, Services Delivery, Implementation
ITU will ensure that gender integration becomes standard practice in all its programmes, activities, projects and services. This means that all of ITU's work will systematically consider and address women's as well as men's needs, priorities and experiences as part of the development of policies, programmes, projects and knowledge-building activities so that women and men benefit equally from ICTs by:

- Including gender assessment in programmes, activities and service delivery; and

- Promoting and showcasing good practices in the uses of ICTs for the advancement and empowerment of women.

c) Governance

Through the GEM policy, the Union's commitment to gender equality will be reflected in all decision-making and planning processes by:

- Integrating a gender perspective in processes and activity planning including strategic and budget planning;
- Ensuring gender balance in decision-making bodies, statutory committees and study groups; and
- Using gender-sensitive language in all ITU documents including pictograms and non-text representation.

6. Responsibility for Implementation

The implementation of this policy requires the commitment, participation and contribution of each staff member. The responsibility and the accountability for its successful implementation rest with senior management and elected officials. ITU's governing bodies are responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated for the implementation of this policy.

The Secretary-General will establish a group including Gender Focal Points representing the General Secretariat and Bureaux, including field offices to support the implementation of the policy. In this regard, the group and the Gender Focal Points will have written terms of references defining their roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the Secretary-General will provide internal resources to ensure that the group has the capability to meet the policy objectives.

The group will prepare a Union-wide action plan with delivery dates, roles and responsibilities. These action plans will be monitored every two years as an integral part of the policy's implementation to ensure that gender integration remains incorporated into the programmes, activities and procedures of the Union.

The Gender Focal Points will act as catalysts in implementing the action plan. They will also assist all staff in their Bureaux/General Secretariat both at headquarters and in the field offices in evaluating and monitoring activities towards the achievement of the objectives of the GEM policy.

The group will also coordinate reporting on gender equality activities as required by the Council and the UN-SWAP.

The GEM policy is a living document that will be reviewed every four years. All staff members are required to give their full support and sustained efforts in carrying it out.