**Extract of the Report of the First Session of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality**[*]

**New York, 26 February to 1 March 2002**

## Gender and information and communications technologies (ICTs)

The Network endorsed the work already done by the task manager International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and entrusted ITU to continue to serve as task manager concentrating on the preparations for the WSIS over the next intersessional period.  The Network approved the changes proposed by the task force on gender and ICTs in the proposed themes for WSIS (see annex III).

As a follow up to the Compendium of projects on Gender and ICTs, compiled by the task manager, it was agreed that ITU would develop the compendium into an interactive database with hyperlinks to the projects mentioned by each agency, subject to availability of funds.

The Network agreed to the following recommendations of the task force:

(a)    To circulate electronically information to members on planned or upcoming ICT events organized in relation to WSIS or other relevant events;

(b)    To support the active involvement of NGOs, civil society and the private sector in their work on gender and ICTs in all activities related to preparations for WSIS;

(c)    To contribute to a publication on initiatives on gender and ICTs with the working title: "Aspects of the Information Society from a Gender Perspective", and using the compendium as a basis for a first draft.  ITU will prepare the first draft of the publication to be reviewed by members of the Network for content and to seek appropriate funding for the publication as an input into WSIS.

(d)    To prepare fact sheets on each theme of WSIS, once adopted by the Prepcom, as official documentation for input into the preparations. DPI will assist ITU in this effort.

(d)    To organize panel sessions as follows:
* "Gender issues in ICTs" during Prepcom 2, scheduled to take place in New York in spring 2003.  DAW and the World Bank offered to jointly organize this panel session.
* " Business and entrepreneurship" during Prepcom 3, scheduled to take place in Geneva in September 2003.  ITC, UNCTAD and ILO will collaborate to organize this session.
* At the Summit itself, a panel with women at ministerial level and women chief executive officers to discuss their perspectives on women and the Information Society;

(f)    To include appropriate "side events" during the Prepcoms and the Summit with exhibition space for UN Agencies and Women's NGOs to exhibit special projects and programmes featuring gender and ICTs.  ITU

will be responsible for transmitting the request for space allocation for these activities to the organizers;

(e)     To establish an expert roster of specialists who could be requested to provide input into possible forum debates.  The roster should include experts from UN Agencies, government , NGOs, private sector and academia;

(f)     To provide comments before end March 2002 on Doc. INF -4 prepared by the Task Manager, outlining the gender dimensions, opportunities and challenges of WSIS, to be used as a fact sheet for the members of IANWGE , NGOs and other interested parties;

(g)     To use electronic means of communication to encourage broad participation and to work actively with all partners in preparation for WSIS.

The Chairperson of the Network will present the above recommendations to Prepcom 1 to be held in Geneva from 1 to 5 July 2002.  These recommendations will also be forwarded to the UN ICT Task Force and the High-Level Summit Organizing Committee (HLSOC).  The Network will present these recommendations and brief their focal points for WSIS on the above recommendations.  Additionally, the Chair of the Network asked will submit the above recommendations to the WSIS Executive Secretariat in Geneva.

In view of the forthcoming discussion at HLCP and HLCM on ICTs to forward the report of IANWGE to those Committees.

The Network welcomed the initiative being taken in the Asian and Pacific region to hold a regional meeting on gender and ICTs in preparation for WSIS. In this regard, the Network recommended that:

(a)     ESCAP explore the possibility of other regional commissions participating in this Asian and Pacific meeting on gender and ICTs; and

(b)     Regional commissions support the integration of the gender perspective into the regional preparatory processes leading up to the WSIS.

**Gender and ICTs**

The Network had the report prepared by the task manager ITU on this item (IANWGE/2002/5).  The presentation focused on the preparation for WSIS, to be held in Geneva (10 to12 December 2003) and in Tunis (2005).  It was pointed out that there was unequal distribution of access to internet, telephones and other telecommunication among the regions.  Proposed themes of the WSIS included: (1) building the infrastructure: bringing the digital divide; (2) opening the gates: universal and equitable access; (3) services and applications: the implications of the IS for economic, social and cultural development; (4) the needs of the users (consumer protection, privacy and security): content and the freedom to communicate; (5) developing a

framework; and (6) ICTs and education.  Although gender perspectives had not been incorporated in the themes, the task force had prepared proposals to engender the themes, which would be submitted to Prepcom 1, to be held in Geneva (1to 5 July 2002).  Continuous efforts should be made by all members of the Network to insure that gender was dealt with in Prepcoms 2 and 3, in 2003 and in regional meetings.

The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Information and Communications, Mr. Pekka Tarjanne, briefed the Network on the activities of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force. Mr. Tarjanne pointed out the uniqueness of the task force as that this was the first effort of the United Nations to take high-tech issues at the United Nations wide as well as to include Member States, private sectors and civil society.  The Task Force had 39 members and had set up six working groups, namely: ICT Policy and Governance; National and Regional e-Strategies; Human Resource Development and Capacity Building; Resource Mobilization; Low Cost Connectivity Access and Business Enterprise and Entrepreneurship.  The Network stressed the importance of incorporating gender perspectives into the work of the task force and promoting capacity building to that end.


## Annex III

**Proposed Themes for WSIS (see shaded text)**

**Building the infrastructure**
- The role of telecommunications, investment and technology in creating the Information Society infrastructure and bridging the Digital Divide, taking into consideration divides such as gender, rural/urban and Developed/Developing Country divide.

**Opening the gates**
- Achieving universal and equitable access for men and women to the Information Society
- Meeting the needs of the developing world, taking into consideration gender gaps and rural/urban divide.
- Guaranteeing the right to Information as a common public good.

**Services and applications**
- The relevance and impact of the Information Society on economic, social and cultural development.
- Opportunities and challenges of the Information Society in meeting the Millennium Development Goals *
- The implications of the Information Society for science
  (what is meant by the term "science"? It seems very restrictive.  Does it include applications such as health, telemedicine and HIV/AIDS?)

**The needs of users**
- Consumer protection, privacy and security, for example: trafficking, cyber crimes, pedophilia, pornography, terrorism
- Relevant content, reflecting cultural and language diversity and the right to communicate

- Ethics of the Information Society
- Equal access of men and women to users training
- Worker protection and workplace privacy (What is intended by the term "worker"?) Rethinking employment and work place, with particular emphasis on home based work.

## Developing guiding principles of a framework
- The roles of government, the private sector and civil society in shaping the Information Society
- Applying principles of equity and gender perspectives in setting up the framework
- Guaranteeing the right to Information as a common public good (public domain information)
- Intellectual property rights and legal exceptions
- Telecommunication and Internet access tariff policies**.**

## ICTs and Education
- ICTs as a lever for educational change to achieve the Millennium Development Goals [1]
- The learning environment: ICTs, teachers, learners and content
- Active use of ICTs as a learning tool to contribute to women's empowerment
- The needs of currently employed workers (what is intended by this phrase?)

---

[1] Related United Nations Millennium Development Goals:
- Education: To narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to ensure that, by 2015, all children complete a full course of primary education.
- Youth employment: to develop strategies to reduce joblessness among youth.
- Building Digital Bridges: to review [government] policies in order to remove regulatory and pricing impediments to Internet access, to make sure people are not denied the opportunities offered by the digital revolution. Private Sector: to develop strong partnerships with the private sector, at both national and international levels, to combat poverty in all its aspects.