

## **PGA's video message for the observance of International Girls in ICT Day**

**Organizers:** Office of the President of the General Assembly

**Date and time:** 28th April 2022

**Duration of PGA remarks:** 2 minutes

**Venue/Format:** Written statement. The statement will be posted on the Girls in ICT Website.

**OPGA focal point:** Zeena Didi

**Objective:** The International Girls in ICT Day takes place every year on the fourth Thursday of April. On this day, the role of girls in information and communication technologies is highlighted and its main objective is to contribute to the empowerment of girls and young women in terms of education and career in the field.



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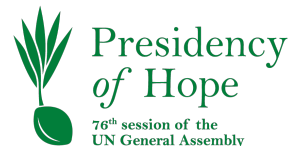
The pace of technological change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century continues to be dizzying, particularly in the digital sphere. There is an ever-growing list of powerful tools at our disposal that lets us learn, communicate, share, and work, more effectively. For young people especially, digital platforms are the primary means through which they connect with one another, and seek information related to their career and finances.

Moreover, as we aspire towards greater gender equality, digital technologies can accelerate our progress. They open new doors for women and girls to empower themselves personally, professionally, and economically.

Indeed, women themselves are active in developing digital technologies, and have played key roles in advancing humanity's frontiers and scientific understanding: Katie Bouman, who helped develop the code that successfully processed the first ever image of a black hole, and Ada Lovelace, who is credited with creating the world's first computer algorithm, are only two among many examples of women innovators in the ICT sphere.

It is imperative that we recognize and support their efforts. It is also critical that we empower more women to tap into the potential of digital technologies. Now especially, as we seek to recover better from COVID-19, we can no longer afford to leave behind or neglect to harness the talents of half of the world's population. Yet, alarmingly, that is precisely what is happening.

Currently 50 percent of the world's women are offline. ITU gender disaggregated data shows that girls are falling behind boys in STEM education. This is not because of any innate discrepancy in aptitudes, but because of exclusion caused by issues of



affordability, gender-biased sociocultural norms, and a lack of education. These need to be addressed if we are to finally close the digital gender divide.

While increased accessibility to the internet for women and girls is vital, our efforts cannot stop there. We must promote the education of women in science and technology fields by facilitating scholarships and training opportunities; by dismantling gender-stereotypes that discourage women from entering these fields; and by taking action to stop online harassment and misogyny.

By taking these actions we can empower a new generation of women who will thrive in the digital sphere - as innovators, entrepreneurs, and seekers of knowledge – and who will build on the contributions of their forebearers to take humanity towards a brighter, more hopeful, more gender-equal destiny.