

**Network of Women Reception
(during WRC-19)
Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt**

2 November 2019

Welcome Remarks

**Mario Maniewicz
Director, Radiocommunication Bureau**

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be with you here today in this reception to celebrate the Network of Women. As the Director of the Radiocommunications Bureau, and being an engineer by formation, I know the challenges you may face in this environment.

The UN Sustainable Development Goal number 5 aims at achieving Gender Equality and empowering all women and girls. The goal aims at providing woman fundamental rights, including the right to live free from violence and from discrimination; to have the right to vote, own property and drive; to have decent work, and to have representation in political and economic decision-making processes.

To date, great progress has been achieved, including increased access to primary education between boys and girls. The percentage of girls in school has increased from 65% in 1970 to 90% in 2015. Only a 2 percent difference on the number of boys in schools. Between 1901 and 2019, 53 women in total have been awarded the Nobel Prize, including the Nobel Prizes in physics and chemistry last year.

Albeit these advancements, the gender divide in science, technology, engineering and mathematic fields, the so called STEM fields, remains significant both in education and in the labour market.

In 2017, only 35% of all students enrolled in STEM-related fields in higher education were women. In the big tech companies – and in the ITU – the percentage of female technical staff is lower than 23%. And only 13% of our Member States have female ICT Ministers. Looking into the BR events, in 2018, from all participants only 16.2% were female. For WRCs, from the WRC-2000 to the WRC-19, there has been just a modest increase in the participation of women from 12% to 18%, respectively.

So, what is being done to change these figures and what else can be done?

First of all, I would like to mention that the work of the Network of Women in capacity-building and mentorship will surely have an impact on the participation of women in ITU meetings and in the number of women taking key roles as chairs and vice-chairs of conferences and study groups. I commend you for your initiatives.

The ITU is also committed to reduce the gender divide in ICTs. Examples of initiatives in this area include:

- The International Girls in ICT Day that aims to encourage girls and young women to consider studies and careers in the ICT fields
- The workshop held by the Women in Aerospace Europe Geneva that aimed at training new delegates to the protocols of ITU-R meetings in the form of a Role Play.

Furthermore, the Plenipot 2018 approved Resolution 70, “mainstreaming a gender perspective in ITU and promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women through telecommunications/information and communication technologies”

Following the guidance of PP-18, and the request of the Radiocommunication Assembly, the BR will conduct training sessions alongside the study group meetings to encourage experts, and in particular women experts, from both developed and developing countries to become chairs of the various ITU-R groups and ensure their success.

I am convinced that the increased participation of women in ITU meetings and in the ITU workforce brings more diversification, increases the range of solutions and improves the decision-making as a whole. And walking the talk, I have chosen as my Deputy a very competent woman, to support my work and the work of the BR throughout my mandate.

I restate my goal to promote the leadership of women and the creation of more opportunities for women, not only in the ITU-R activities, but also within national administrations. I am committed to work towards this end as the BR Director.

And, of course, I welcome all your suggestions and proposals to empower women in ICTs.

Thank you very much.