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| **Council 2017Geneva, 15-25 May 2017** |  |
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| **Agenda item: PL 1.3** | **Document C17/91-E** |
| **28 April 2017** |
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Note by the Secretary-General

CONTRIBUTION FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

chairman’s report: council working group oN international internet-related public policy issues (CWG-Internet)

I have the honour to transmit to the Member States of the Council a contribution submitted by **the United States of America**.

 Houlin ZHAO
 Secretary-General

Contribution from the United States of America

chairman’s report: council working group oN international internet-related public policy issues (CWG-Internet)

**Introduction**

In the Chairman’s report (C17/51), the Council is asked to provide guidance on what topic should be put forward for the next Physical Open Consultation Meeting of the CWG-INTERNET.

**Background**

Resolution 1336 (Mod. 2015) calls for the Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy issues (CWG-INTERNET) to “decide on the international Internet-related public policy issues for open consultations in accordance with Council Resolution 1344.” As the Chairman’s report (C17/51) indicates, the Ninth meeting of the working group did not determine an agreed topic for the next open consultation. Rather, two disparate topics have been forwarded to the Council for its consideration.

**Discussion**

The United States is a strong proponent of the Physical Open Consultation and believes the meetings are a productive forum for discussion and exchanging information. As such, we continue to support the identification of a single topic for these meetings. The CWG-Internet consultations have focused on a single issue since the outset of these important consultations with all interested stakeholders. Doing so has proven to be an effective means of attracting input on specific issues from a wide range of interested parties, providing the ITU community with useful insights. This wealth of information is further supplemented by a panel of experts who present views on the topic, resulting in informative and productive discussion. We believe that an open consultation devoted to more than one topic, particularly if those topics are not related to one another, would be distracting, potentially yielding fewer inputs and diluting the value of the discussion.

At the last CWG-INTERNET meeting, the United States proposed Sustainable Development Goal #5: Gender Equality as the topic for the next Physical Open Consultation and we continue to support this topic. Goal 5.b states “Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.”

Although the world has made great progress toward gender equality and women’s empowerment and inclusion, there is still significant work to be done. According to the ITU’s *ICT Facts and Figures for 2016,* the gender gap is growing from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016. In 2016, Internet penetration rates for men in Africa were 28.4% compared to 21.9% for women and in Europe penetration rates for men were 82% compared to 76.3% for women.

Providing women and girls with access to education, health care, and employment opportunities and increasing their participation and representation in political and economic decision-making processes fuels sustainable economies and benefits societies. The Internet has been recognized as an important tool to making progress in this regard, most recently by the High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society. UNGA Resolution 70/125 specifically highlights the gender digital divide that exists between men and women and calls for “immediate measures” to achieve gender equality for Internet users by 2020.

In March 2017, the report of the Broadband Commission Working Group of the Digital Gender Divide underscored the need to address the challenges and barrier in internet and broadband access. The report notes the urgent need for more engagement and action to help narrow this critical divide and encourages the need for more resources to tackle some of the areas of recommended actions.

The importance of this issue to ITU membership and the Union is clear from Resolution 70 on *Mainstreaming a gender perspective in ITU and promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women through information and communication technologies* (Rev. Busan, 2014). In response, the ITU has implemented substantial work in the field (C16/6-E) and a consultation would allow for an in-depth exploration of good practices and lessons learned. In addition, ITU’s Strategic Plan for 2016-2019 (Resolution 71, Rev. Busan, 2014) identifies inclusiveness and bridging the gender digital divide as a major goal for the Union and sets a target of achieving gender equality among Internet users by 2020.

**Proposal**

For the next open consultation, the U.S. proposes to discuss Sustainable Development Goal #5: Gender Equality and specifically Goal 5.b, which states “enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.”