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| **Physical Open Consultations of the  Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues** |  |
| **Geneva, 22 January 2018** |  |
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PHYSICAL OPEN CONSULTATIONS OF THE COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL INTERNET-RELATED PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

**Brief Summary of the Online Open Consultation and Physical Open Consultation Meeting   
(October 2017- January 2018)**

**1. Introduction**

Following discussions during the 2016 Session of the ITU Council, which took place from 25 May to 2 June 2016, in Geneva, Switzerland, Council instructed the CWG-Internet to produce a brief summary of the Open Online Consultation and Physical Open Consultation Meetings:

a) ITU secretariat should prepare a brief draft summary of the written contributions to the online open consultation and the discussions during the physical open consultation meeting,

b) Stakeholders present at the physical open consultation meeting should agree on the brief summary,

c) Submit brief summary, without edits, to the next CWG-Internet for inclusion as an Annex to the Chairman’s report.

d) CWG-Internet should consider and discuss the open consultation brief summary.

**2. Online Open Consultation on "Bridging the Digital Gender Divide"**  
**2.1** An Online Open Consultation was conducted from October 2017 to January 2018 on the topic of "Bridging the Digital Gender Divide". During this consultation 52 responses were received from a variety of stakeholders and regions (21 Government entities, 22 Civil Society and Technical Community entities, 7 Private Sector entities and Industry Associations and 2 Intergovernmental Organizations). The responses provided rich inputs, sharing different views with regard to the five specific questions of the consultation:

**“Bridging the Digital Gender Divide**

CWG-Internet invites all stakeholders to submit contributions on achieving gender equality for Internet users, focusing on the following questions:  
  
1. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?  
2. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to promote the access and use of ICTs by SMEs in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, in order to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?  
3. Which are the available sources and mechanisms for measuring women's participation in the digital economy with focus on SME's and micro-enterprises?  
4. What measures/policies could be envisioned in order to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?  
5. What are the gaps in addressing these challenges? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments?”

The meeting appreciated and thanked all stakeholders who responded to the online consultations.

**2.2** A compilation of the summaries received directly from the individual online submitters, including relevant comments made by participants during the meeting, can be found in the [Annex](#Annex) of this document. The detailed responses and views submitted during the Online Open Consultation can be found in the published compilation document [OPCWGINT6/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-OPCWGINT6-C-0002/en).

**3. Physical Open Consultation meeting on "Bridging the Digital Gender Divide"**

**3.1** The sixth Physical Open Consultation meeting, on the topic of “Bridging the Digital Gender Divide", took place on 22 January 2018 at the ITU HQs in Geneva, Switzerland with over 100 registered participants, both onsite and remotely.

**3.2** On behalf of the ITU Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General Mr. Malcolm Johnson opened the meeting welcoming the participants to the Physical Open Consultation meeting. He informed the meeting that CWG-Internet Chairman Mr. Majed Al-Mazyed, was not able to join due to unavoidable commitments and thanked Vice-Chairman, Mr. Kishore Babu from India, for stepping forward to chair the meeting. He further commended the results of the Online Open Consultation and highlighted the importance of the issue at hand and the need for immediate global action.

**3.3** A panel session was held at the beginning of the Physical Open Consultation meeting, with the following panellists:

**Speakers:**

**Marianne Bitar Karam,** Director of MENA Operations & Lebanon Country Director, DOT

**Ann Rosenberg**, Purpose Driven SVP & Global Head of SAP Next-Gen, SAP

**Annaliese Williams**, Acting Director, International Engagement, Department of Communications, Australia

**Michael Best**, Director, UNU-CS

**Doreen Bogdan-Martin**, Chief of Strategic Planning and Membership Department, ITU

**Lia Kiessling**, Senior Director, Strategic Communications, Internet Society

**Anna Mori**, Women and Trade Programme Officer, International Trade Centre (ITC)

**Moderator:**

**Santiago Reyes-Borda,** Senior Policy Advisor - International Telecommunications Policy,

‎Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Canada

Presentations made during the panel session will be made available on the [ITU Website](http://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/open-consultations.aspx).

The intent of the panel session was to share experiences, information, opinions and positions with regard to the topic of “Bridging the Digital Gender Divide”. Expert panellists representing various stakeholder groups presented their unique experiences and shared practices and views, as these related to the questions of the open consultation. The panel was followed by an open discussion with the rest of the participants.

**3.4** Compilation document [OPCWGINT6/2](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-OPCWGINT6-C-0002/en) was presented during the physical consultation meeting and various stakeholders took the floor, both onsite and remotely, to present their submitted views.

**4. Summary of Discussions during the Physical Open Consultation meeting   
  
4.1.** Stakeholders present at the physical open consultation meeting agreed on the brief summary of the sixth Physical Open Consultation meeting of CWG-Internet, as included below:

**4.2** With ICTs recognized as a driver for sustainable development, bridging the digital gender divide was identified as an essential part in the implementation process of the Sustainable Development Agenda.   
  
**4.3** A number of elements were identified as limiting women’s full participation in the digital era. These include *inter alia:* limited access andpoor connectivity; lack of access to affordable ICT devices and services; lack of digital skills; lack of relevant content; online threats; low participation of women in leadership positions; and social, cultural, economic and political factors.

**4.4** Women’s participation in the digital economy was further recognized as essential for accelerating economic growth within a country, as well as in eradicating poverty especially in rural and remote areas. In this regard, support of women entrepreneurship through *inter alia* fostering entrepreneurial and ICT skills, providing training and mentorship opportunities, facilitating access to funding and ensuring an enabling regulatory and legal environment was deemed necessary.

**4.5** Transformative change is needed to close the digital gender gap. Governments, and other stakeholders, were further encouraged to take a holistic approach towards women’s empowerment through digital technologies, by *inter alia:*

1. integrating gender perspectives in national strategies and policies, and allocating necessary budgetary resources to ensure implementation;
2. fostering investment in ICT infrastructure for increasing access;
3. tackling biases and perception issues;
4. promoting digital skills for girls and women within the education system and through capacity building initiatives;
5. promoting the development of relevant and local content;
6. promoting role models and rolling out mentoring programmes;
7. providing incentives to girls and women for pursuing a STEM education and career;
8. advancing women’s involvement in leadership roles in the technology sector, as well as their participation in Internet-related policy-making processes;
9. adopting measures to increase trust, security and data protection for women online;
10. promoting the collection of gender-disaggregated data for better identifying existing gaps in women’s digital inclusion and participation in the digital economy;

**4.6** Participants elaborated on existing projects and initiatives aiming at addressing the identified gaps and providing support to women and women-owned SMEs, particularly in developing and least-developed countries.

**4.7** International, regional and national engagement of all stakeholders with regard to the discussed issues was encouraged.

**4.8** Participants also stressed the importance of taking into account a gender perspective and implementing a human rights-based approach in policy-making.

**4.9** Under Agenda item 6, a participant proposed the following as a topic for a future open consultation: "Dealing with the aspects within the mandate of ITU of the externalities and asymmetric information that may result in market failures with respect to the security of IoT devices."  
  
Another participant proposed the following as a topic for a future open consultation: “The relationship between Internet blocking and the SDGs”.   
  
Other participants welcomed proposals on future topics and suggested that these be reflected in the final meeting summary for consideration by the CWG-Internet.

**4.10** Participants invited the next meeting of the Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet) taking place on 25-26 January 2018 to discuss and consider the outcomes of this Open Consultation.

**4.11** It was further noted by a number of participants throughout the meeting that it was unfortunate this important physical consultation meeting was scheduled by the ITU in parallel with another Council Working Group meeting, thus limiting participation, particularly by smaller delegations. To enable participation by all the members present and take benefit of stakeholder comments on important themes, it was suggested that this be avoided in the future.

**5. Closing**

**5.1** In closing, Mr. Kishore Babu thanked all stakeholders who sent submissions and participated in the open consultation discussions and encouraged the CWG-Internet to consider the received submissions and the fruitful discussions of this meeting. He further thanked the moderator and the panellists for the informative panel session, which the meeting found very useful. He also expressed his thanks to ITU Deputy Secretary-General for his presence and support and the Secretariat, in particular Ms. Despoina Sareidaki and Mr. Preetam Maloor, for their efficient assistance during the meeting.

**5.2** The participants thanked the Chairman and Secretariat for their effective organisation and management of the physical meeting.

ANNEX

*[Scroll to the next page]*

*NOTE: Please note that due to the different formats used by respondents to the online consultation, the following table includes:*

*• SUMMARIES provided in the online submissions;*

*• In the absence of an explicit SUMMARY text in the online submissions, the text provided by respondents in the comments section of the online submission form was included.*

*• Comments made by participants of the Physical Open Consultation meeting of 22 January 2018, who took the floor during the meeting and commented on specific online submissions presented by other participants.*

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|  | **Date** | **Submitter** | **Summary** |
|  | September 28, 2017 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=5) | I refer to the previous open consultation. There were many submission and an excellent discussion at the physical meeting. A very good summary of the discussions was prepared. So I was disappointed that there was no discussion in CWG-Internet of the substance of the report of the open consultation. There was time in the meeting to do so. And Member States had several days to prepare after the end of the open consultation and before the beginning of CWG-Internet. Based on that experience, I would like to propose that, during the physical meeting of the present open consultation, we agree to invite Member States to discuss the substance of the report of the open consultation at the CWG-Internet meeting that will take place after the open consultation. |
|  | September 28, 2017 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=6) | I would like to propose the following topic for the next open consultation: "Dealing with the aspects within the mandate of ITU of the externalities and asymmetric information that may result in market failures with respect to the security of IoT devices." |
|  | September 28, 2017 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=7) | The factors impede Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls are largely the factors that we have discussed in our previous submissions to CWG-Internet, in particular the urgent need to reduce the cost of connectivity in developing countries. This can be achieved by fostering competition (which may include functional separation), funding infrastructure, taking steps to reduce the cost of international connectivity, supporting the development of local content, capacity building, and a proper governance system.  It is also necessary to improve trust and security. It is urgent to recognize that market failures are partly the cause of the current lack of security of the Internet. Steps must be taken to address the externalities arising from lack of security (entities that do not secure their systems sufficiently do not bear all the costs of security breaches), and to address information asymmetries (consumers have no way of knowing which services are sufficiently secure). At the same time, it is imperative to protect human rights, protect data privacy, protect consumers and workers (in particular against abuse by dominant platforms), curtail unnecessary and disproportionate mass surveillance, address the issue of job destruction and wealth concentration engendered by the Internet’s current governance mechanisms, address the ethical issues arising from automation and artificial intelligence, and deal with platform dominance.  The body of the paper contains specific recommendations for each of these issues, as well as specific recommendations regarding how to address the under-representation of women in key decision-making structures in the ITU.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/7/CWG-Internet%202018.docx) |
|  | October 03, 2017 | [Independent  (St.Lucia)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=8) | The questions posed in this consultation are not about “gender equality”. They are about improving access to the Internet for women and girls: which is a laudable aim but only a part of “gender issues” and gender equality. We provide a link to a web site that provides extensive information on approaches and examples of good practices. We note that many women work in the informal sector, so there often aren’t adequate sources for measuring women’s participation. Measures and policies to foster the role of women include caring for children and the elderly; ICT training; measures to facilitate e-commerce including e-payments, reduction of customs duties, fast, reliable and inexpensive shipments. It is important to integrate ICTs in everyday life. Literacy is a continuing gap and it is important to develop digital literacy. Role models such as Governor General Dame Pearlette Louisy of Saint Lucia (in the Caribbean) are important. And it is important to recognise that in some parts of the world there are emerging concerns regarding marginalised young men and boys.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/8/CWG-Internet%202018%20Deirdre.docx) |
|  | October 11, 2017 | [IT for Change (India)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=9) | Through a feminist lens that brings together economic justice and gender justice concerns, this contribution traces the key elements of the right to access, right to knowledge and right to development in the network society context. It highlights how this three-pronged approach to scoping the “right to communicate” can serve as a guiding framework for feminist analysis and action at the intersections of gender, digital technologies and development. It also demonstrates how the prevailing discourse on women’s human rights needs to move beyond the online-offline binary to discern the rights violations occurring in the hybrid contexts of techno-mediated life, in the unfreedoms wrought by data, digitalisation and networks.  This contribution chalks out strategic directions for feminist advocacy in relation to information and communications technologies (ICTs), at different scales and spaces – global, national and local. Specific agendas for advocacy in relation to critical global forums and national governments are sketched out along with the work needed for feminist movement building.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/9/CWG-Internet%202018-Anita%20IT%20for%20Change.pdf) |
|  | October 11, 2017 | [achrafsellam.com Universal Market (Morocco)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=10) | Dear ITU CWG, Please, find an attachment to this comment. Thank you, Sir. ACHRAF SELLAM  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/10/itu-cwg-achrafsellam-summary-2017.pdf) |
|  | October 13, 2017 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=11) | In 1.2 of our submission of 28 September to this consultation, we proposed that ITU conduct a survey on perceptions of gender diversity in ITU analogous to the one conducted by ICANN in June 2017. ICANN has now published the results of its survey, they are available at: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/gender-diversity-participation-survey-report-2017-10-11-en |
|  | October 20, 2017 | [Nakaseke Telecentre (Uganda)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=12) | The Gender digital devide can be reduced by increasing access to affordable digital devices which are reliable with cheaper internet connectivity in Rural areas especially in Africa. |
|  | October 26, 2017 | [Dig It (Republic of the Congo)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=13) | I am a manger of Dig It, society of IT. |
|  | November 13, 2017 | [Ministry of Communication, Telecommunications, Posts And Digital Economy (Senegal)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=15) | My contribution is:  Call on Governments, Private Sector, Media, Civil Society, and International Organisations to:  1) Integrate and promote gender perspectives in the development of public policy through the integration of gender equality targets and key performance indicators into strategies, policies, plans and budgets, with a specific focus on ensuring policy dialogue at the grassroots level between public policy decision-makers, media and civil society, particularly women and youth. This must entail synergies between all ministries and government agencies, for effective gender mainstreaming.  2) Address the barriers women face in both access, use, and production of local content on the internet that impede gender equality online, and promote:  a. unlimited and unfettered access to affordable internet;  b. women’s safety and digital rights online, as well as the use of ICTs to ensure women are involved in the fight against online harassment, trolling, and bullying, violation of privacy, radicalisation and violent extremism;  c. digital equality, literacy and skills, and confidence, through the promotion of multi-stakeholder and public-private partnerships to promote digital citizenship, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship;  d. availability of relevant and localised content, applications, and services developed by and for women and girls;  e. mobilisation of and dialogue with communities working already on gender data-driven initiatives, and work to minimise duplication of efforts while maximising the scalability of interventions.  3) Support concrete multi-stakeholder cooperation, with a focus on the Francophone Africa region, through the development of tools and policies to support local, national and international efforts; effective sharing of best practices and methodologies to address the digital gender gap, as well as the development of sustainable and scalable initiatives, working with grassroots and international organisations of women and girls, public policy decision-makers, the private sector, and innovators and entrepreneurs, to ensure the expansion and scaling of successful initiatives and best practices. Consider the implementation of periodic convenings to foster knowledge exchange and accountability of governments.  4) Commit to and advocate for the collection and analysis of gender-based data. Secure resources to enable gender data collection and dissemination to monitor progress on digital equality. This data must be open to all to see, open licensed, and machine-readable; open gender data is essential in encouraging regional accountability and enabling transnational knowledge exchange.  5) Advocate for appropriate financial investment from international, regional, sub-regional, national, and local funding mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the aforementioned policies and programmes developed to promote gender equality in the online sphere and ICT sector.  6) Accelerate the adoption, consolidation and implementation of requisite legislation, such as Right to Information laws and rights-based cybersecurity laws, integration of cyber security and mobilisation on the dangers of ICTs in gender policies and programmes.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/15/AccessibleForm_OpenConsultations_Oct2017%20(2).doc) |
|  | November 20, 2017 | [Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society (Ecuador)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=16) | In 2017, the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society (MINTEL) established a public policy schedule for the development of telecommunications an information society in Ecuador. Many of the policies developed in framework of this schedule considered the transversal initiative to “promote universal access, especially in rural areas and slums, taking special attention to gender equality”.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/16/SUMMARY.docx) |
|  | November 26, 2017 | [CITRA (Kuwait)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=17) | [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/17/Response%20to%20ITU%20Gender%20Divide%20v.2%202017.docx)  *COMMENT:*  *One member state made the following comment with regard to this online submission:*  *“We take this opportunity to point out that this contribution is exactly why the open consultations are such an important tool within the Union.  They bring to the fore the experiences of countries and stakeholders with vastly different cultural context and this serves to improve common understandings.”* |
|  | December 01, 2017 | [Ministry of Interior, General Secretariat for Gender Equality (Greece)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=18) | **A comprehensive list of policies and actions initiated by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality on the promotion of digital agenda**  **A.** The National Action Plan on Gender Equality serves as the roadmap for the governmental policies on equality between women and men in Greece during the period 2016-2020.  In particular, the priorities of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016-2020 are in accordance with the guidelines of the European Commission to the 28 EU Member-States and concern the following policy areas:  1) social cohesion, poverty, immigration and multiple discrimination  2) gender-based violence  3) labour market and reconciliation of family and professional life  4) education, training, culture, sports and mass media  5) health  6) decision-making.  The issue of digital literacy in favour of women and girls has been emphatically incorporated in all policy areas for the period 2016-2020 through further development of synergies among competent stakeholders from the public and the private sector.  **B.** A Protocol of Cooperation has been activated between the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE), the Research Centre for Gender Equality (an entity supervised by the Ministry), the National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government and the Ministry of Education, Research & Religious Affairs on the promotion of gender equality in the primary education (a number of training seminars to the educational personnel of primary schools are in the process of implementation throughout the country, so that the principles of equality and non-discrimination between the two sexes are perceived by the young generation at a very early stage); the issue of digital literacy can be included in the curricula of the training seminars aiming at the development of methods and tools for the advancement of gender equality from an early stage.  It is noted that the bilateral cooperation between the GSGE, i.e. the governmental organization in charge of equality between women and men in Greece, and the Ministry of Education has been extended to all three educational levels (primary, secondary and tertiary education).  **C.** The political leadership in charge of gender equality has contacted a number of representatives of Ministries, Agencies and social partners aiming at a holistic approach to the implementation of gender equality policies. In the framework of these initiatives, the final draft of a Bill on substantive gender equality has already submitted to the competent Minister of Interior, which is expected to be forwarded to the Hellenic Parliament for further elaboration and adoption; the issue of female digital empowerment is covered by the provisions of the Bill.  **D.** An "Observatory on Gender Equality" has been set up in the General Secretariat for Gender Equality. The Flagship Project is entitled "Service organization for the integration, monitoring and evaluation of Gender Equality Policies in all aspects of Public Sector's Actions (Observatory)"; its aim is to support Public Administration and Local Governments to design, implement and evaluate policies concerning gender equality through detailed gender-segregated data on equality issues (statistics and surveys) deriving from the development and function of relevant tools. The issue of digital literacy and ICT is concisely included in the competences of the GSGE Observatory.  It has to be underlined that the specific project has been selected by the European Commission as a national good practice in the Annual Report on Equality between Women and Men in the European Union 2015 (Brussels, March 2016): page 40 of the Report  http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual\_reports/2016\_annual\_report\_2015\_web\_en.pdf .  **E.** Cooperation between the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, i.e. the governmental organization in charge of equality between women and men in Greece, and the National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government, i.e. the national strategic agent for the development of the human resources of the public administration and local government, has been set up aiming to gender mainstreaming in the curricula and the activities of the National Centre for Public Administration & Local Administration (digital literacy and ICT included).  **F.** The General Secretariat for Gender Equality has supported the creation of methodologies and toolkits aiming to gender mainstreaming in public policies of the 13 Regions and the 15 most populated Municipalities of Greece (Programming Period 2007-2013 co-financed by the European Union). The issue of female digital empowerment has been incorporated in the outcome of the specific Project.  **G.** In the framework of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union (January-June 2014), the General Secretariat for Gender Equality organised, in collaboration with the European Centre for Women and Technology and in cooperation with National and European Stakeholders, the Conference entitled “Women & Girls Go Digital, National Action Plan for increasing the female talent in digital jobs” (Athens, 4-4-2014).  In the context of Europe 2020 Strategy and in particular of the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Europe, the objective of the Conference has been to demonstrate the link between e-Skills, Gender Diversity and ICT as a key factor for economic growth based on the creation of digital jobs. The Conference addressed the digital skills gap and raised awareness about the added value by including female talent in digital jobs, research and innovation. Emphasis was given to the promotion of new opportunities for young digital entrepreneurs and to the challenges of the role of the media in the new digital era.  The Initiative “Women & Girls Go Digital in Greece – WGGDG” aims to increase the female talent in Digital Jobs based on the European Commission’s Initiative Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs and elaborated in collaboration with national and European stakeholders.  Positive reference to the Greek initiative is made in the 2015 Report by the European Parliament entitled “Empowering women on the Internet” (pages 16-17): http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/536473/IPOL\_IDA(2015)536473\_EN.pdf .  Thanks to the specific Initiative, Greece won a major international award in the category of “digital opportunity”. The WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards is a biannual event for the recognition of excellence in digital technology, established by the World Information Technology and Services Alliance. The award for the “Women and Girls Go Digital” Initiative in the category of “digital opportunity” was announced on September 30th 2014, as part of the 19th World Information Technology and Services Conference held in Mexico. The WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards are granted to institutions and enterprises that capitalize on ICT innovation for the benefit of the public sector and the citizen, creating new opportunities for employment and sustainable development (press release in English: https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016805969a9 ).  A very concrete positive outcome of our coalition is the fact that on the 8th of September, 2016 the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) announced a public call for five scholarships to Greek female graduates for attending the Postgraduate Programme in Business Administration offered by the Hellenic Management Association (EEDE) in Athens: https://www.wegate.eu/public-call-five-scholarships-greek-female-graduates-attend-postgraduate-programme-business .  **H.** The General Secretariat for Gender Equality has been a partner of the Project entitled “Innovation and Employability for Women, E-Women” co-financed by the European Economic Area (EEA Grants 2009-2014). Its aim has been to identify the current evolution of technology in relation to women’s participation and sensitization, especially for young women, associated with ICT and employment (employment/employability and entrepreneurship). The Project E-Women started in January 2016 and concluded in March 2017: http://www.iewomen.eu/1\_2/ieWomen .  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/18/ITU%20-%20Greece%20Dimosthenis%20Tremos.doc) |
|  | December 13, 2017 | [National Telecommunications Corporation – NTC (Sudan)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=19) | 1. As an internet public policy: All of ICT stakeholders must work together to give women affordable internet access and digital literacy with smart devices. 2. To promote women access in the areas of SMEs by adapting ICT technologies , better chances in Micro-finance schemes have to provided to them so that they can achieve greater contribution in the digital economy . 3. Tailored job descriptions, gender-balanced applicant quotas and balanced recruitment panels are representing appropriate sources and mechanism for women participating in the digital economy. Moreover, annual statistics of women SME- owned projects should be reported and reviewed by the concerned ministries. 4. To foster the role of women in Sudan, all Initiatives and Innovation in SMEs managed by women should be awarded and encouraged by the government. 5. Formal planning, sponsoring programs and gender-specific training are some examples of challenges that encounter the government to address. Therefore, phase-back programs to fill the talent pipelines are required, particularly at management levels which will be the most relevant role for the government to play. 6. Furthermore, awareness and outreach programs to equip young girls and women with the skills and inspiration needed to pursue a career in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and relevant qualifications.   [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/19/Bridging%20the%20Digital%20Gender%20Divide%20-%20Sudan%20Coments.docx) |
|  | December 13, 2017 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=20) | The attached statement is not a direct response to the questions posed in the present open consultation. Nevertheless, I believe that it could be of interest, because it makes the point that actions need to be taken to ensure social equity in general, not just for women, and that a focus on gender issues can be used to mask an unwillingness to tackle fundamental issues that impede the development of all people, not just women. Or, worse, actions promoted as favoring women, could actually favor only a small fraction of women and lead to exacerbating the fundamental divides that are drivers of gender inequality. As the paper puts the matter: "It is now clear, that the neoliberal project involving austerity, privatisation, deregulation of finance, markets and corporations, and trade and investment liberalization has had a devastating and discriminatory impact on women. Neoliberalism is sexist and is simply incapable of supporting gender-­‐equitable and just sustainable development, no matter how it is spun."  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/20/Feminist%20WTO%20Statement%20with%20FINAL%20164%20Endorsements.pdf) |
|  | December 15, 2017 | [International Chamber of Commerce  (France)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=21) | *Speaking on behalf of businesses from all sectors and sizes in every part of the world, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Business Action to Support the Information Society (BASIS) is of the view that information and communication technologies (ICT) and the Internet are enablers to growth, development and inclusion. They empower citizens, support the spread of knowledge, facilitate communication and participation and allow for continuous innovation and emerging technologies. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for several advances by the year 2030. The UN 2030 Agenda cites access to and deployment of ICT as specific targets in four of the SDGs (4, 5, 9 and 17). SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and calls for enhanced use of enabling technology – ICT in particular – to promote the empowerment of women. While ICT can contribute to the advancement of all 17 goals, the specific target in SDG 5 is a testament to the equalizing power of the Internet and the enormous potential ICT has on the empowerment of women and girls worldwide. ICC would like to take this opportunity to share global business perspectives on the topics addressed in the consultation.*  [*View submitted document*](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/21/ICC%20BASIS_ITU%20CWG%20OC_Gender_151217.pdf)  *COMMENT:*  *One participant made the following comment with regard to this online submission:*  *“Contrary to what ICC states, privacy and security are not best protected by voluntary compliance with broadly accepted industry guidelines.*  *Attempts to turn private companies into de facto regulators are nothing more than calls for corporatism, that is denial of democratic decision- making.*  *An excellent legal analysis of the dangerous trends towards corporatism is given here:*  *https://lpeblog.org/2017/12/06/from-territorial-to-functional- sovereignty-the-case-of-amazon/*  *As the cited author points out, only political organization within states, and at the international level, can stop corporate power from further undermining democracy.”* |
|  | December 15, 2017 | [U.S. Council for International Business (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=22) | The U.S. Council for International Business (USCIB) appreciates the opportunity to participate in the open consultation convened by the ITU Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet) on the topic of “Bridging the Digital Gender Divide.” USCIB is a U.S.-based trade association composed of more than 300 multinational companies, law firms, and business associations from every sector of the U.S. economy, with operations in every region of the world. In particular, USCIB Members include a broad cross-section of the leading global companies in the information and communications technology (ICT) sectors.  USCIB organized a workshop at the 2016 Internet Governance Forum (IGF), “An Internet of Women by 2020: WSIS Vision into Reality.” This submission highlights key points from that workshop that address questions posed in this open consultation. It also provides insights from USCIB Members about challenges they have encountered in their efforts to bridge the gender digital divide and a sampling of industry initiatives aimed to close this gap. Highlights are as follows:  • The challenge of bridging the gender digital divide must be addressed holistically; there is no one single factor driving the division or the resolution;  • There is a dearth of data and metrics focused on the extent of female participation in the digital economy, which hampers efforts to identify gaps;  • Efforts to measure engagement in the digital economy do not appropriately account for cultural factors that often serve as the most stubborn barrier to bridging the gender digital divide;  • Partnerships are critical, between the public and private sectors, business and non-profits, intergovernmental organizations, and between local and national governments. No one organization can tackle this problem alone;  • Women need to be assured that the online environment is safe;  • Policy implementation and follow-through are critical; and  • Efforts to bridge the gender digital divide are most effectively addressed via multistakeholder processes.  Our complete submission is attached.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/22/USCIB%20comments.Dig.Gender.Divide.121517.final.pdf) |
|  | December 21, 2017 | [Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (Sweden)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=23) | The enclosed comments are submitted on behalf of Sweden.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/23/Open%20consultation%20submission%20from%20S.docx) |
|  | December 21, 2017 | [Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (Pakistan)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=24) | Please find attached the response from our side. We welcome any query in this regard to address and take the process forward.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/24/Open%20Consultation_Pakistan_response.docx) |
|  | December 21, 2017 | [Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=25) | The primary obstacles to women’s access to the digital economy are the same as those preventing access to the formal economy. Overcoming the digital gender divide to increase female entrepreneurship and M/SME participation in LDCs and emerging markets first requires commitment by governments to pass common sense policy and institutional reforms. The high costs to join the formal-digital economy are indeed exacerbated by poor ICT infrastructure, low internet penetration, low technical capacity, and limited access to capital, but three familiar barriers persist in many markets: disincentives to join the formal economy; inflexible labor laws; lack of trust in contract enforcement (on and offline). (i) Disincentives to formalize are often high cost and time barriers to business registration, vulnerability to bribery and extortion, arbitrary rules and taxation, etc. (ii) Inflexible labor laws prevent entrepreneurs from hiring staff to grow into larger SMEs, limit risk taking requiring short-term resource investment in technical capacity or skills, and prevents educational transfer among women in industries. (iii) Lack of trust in contract enforcement on and offline disincentivize commerce, especially B2B transactions in a weak legal environment. Addressing the gender digital divide in commerce in many economies first requires an adequate and equitable business environment offline. Reforms that promote technological transfer or greater access through subsidies are not sufficient to overcome the larger market obstacles facing female entrepreneurs and small business owners. |
|  | December 21, 2017 | [GSMA (United Kingdom)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=26) | This GSMA Connected Women submission highlights the importance of accelerating digital inclusion for women, the challenges of doing so, and examples of what industry, policy-makers and other stakeholders are doing or could do to address these challenges.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/26/GSMA%20ITU%20Gender%20Consultation%20final.docx) |
|  | December 22, 2017 | [TURIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (Italy)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=27) | **Question 1:**  **What approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?** The Turin Chamber of commerce by its Women in business committee (WBC) in September 2017 established an European Network to share contents and best practices and to define some guidelines to abate gender gap in digital economy.  From November 2017 to February 2018 the Women in business committee will organize some meeting with stakeholders to look for issues that will be submitted to the European Network on March 2018.  The European Network in 2018 will collect all the suggestions in a document containing proposal to submit to European Commission in order to define guidelines and project focused to abate gender gap in digital economy.  **Question 2:**  **What approaches and examples of good practices are available to promote the access and use of ICTs by SMEs in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, in order to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?** WBC last Autumn organized two event to promote the use of ICTs by SMEs: “Skills and Innovation: a female potentials” and “Digital Innovation Driver 4 Empowerment” focused to present the opportunity to use digital instrument and to consider digital economy the opportunity to make the SMEs more competitive.  Furthermore, digitalization would be an opportunity for the female empowerment and for the female professional growth.  Also in 2018 WBC intend project some activities to make know entrepreneurial good practices in order to sensitize SMEs to use ICTs.  About Turin Chamber of Commerce, it helps SMEs to approach the themes of Industry 4.0, in particular digitization.  It’s in fact one of the "Digital Business Points (PID)", envisaged by the National Industry 4.0 Plan to disseminate at a local level the basic knowledge on technologies in the Industry 4.0 field.  In particular, within the framework of the Industry 4.0 national network, the PIDs of the Chambers of Commerce:   * Provide a basic understanding of the "Industry 4.0" technologies among companies, including through the organization of seminars and training courses * Check The digital maturity of companies * Support individual assistance and mentoring plans * Orientate companies, for more specialized services, towards Competence Centers and Digital Innovation Hubs * Economically support SMEs in digital transformation processes   In 2017, in 2017 the project “digital excellence” was organized: theoretical and practical training seminars, to which entrepreneurs would be able to know the best strategies to be online. At the end of each seminar, moreover, some tutors was available for further personalized sessions that help them to start a concrete digital journey. All seminars and insights was free.  **Question 3:**  **Which are the available sources and mechanisms for measuring women's participation in the digital economy with focus on SME's and micro-enterprises?**  At the moment the Chamber or commerce and WBC don’t have an instrument for measuring women’s participation in the digital economy but they would promote some analysis in order to know how many SMEs and micro enterprises use ICTs and how many women are involved in digital activities or digital functions.  The results of the analysis could be important to start a constant monitor of the situation and help to find some solution to abate the female digital gap in SMEs.  **Question 4:**  **What measures/policies could be envisioned in order to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?** In 2018, the WIC will be involved in a project aimed at identifying a model of female leadership in order to strengthen the role of women in decision-making and top management roles.  A specific part of the project will be focused to introduce the digital leader: skills, characteristics and opportunities.  We think that the digitalization is an opportunity for women and help them to empower themselves.  **Question 5:**  **What are the gaps in addressing these challenges? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments?** The most important gap is that there are too few girls approaching STEM subjects; consequently there are few women involved in Science and Technologies and ICTs. So that it would be important that governments take measures to encourage girls to approach the STEM subjects and support them in their training process.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/27/AccessibleForm_OpenConsultations_Oct2017.docx) |
|  | December 22, 2017 | [Ministry of Popular Power of Universitary Education, Science and Technology (Venezuela)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=28) | [View submitted document in Spanish](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/28/Cuestionario%20GTC-%20Internet%20_Brecha%20de%20Genero-RBV.pdf)  [View submitted document in English](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/28/GTC-INTERNET%20-%20Brecha%20de%20G%C3%A9nero%20Ingles%20-%201.odt) |
|  | December 23, 2017 | [Comune di Milano (Italy)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=29) | In September 2016, the Mayor of Milan set up the office of Councillor for Digital Transformation and Citizen Services. Since then, the very core of our work is to increase girls and women participation to all the different STEM careers and training, giving them all the information and chances to pursue a scientific / technological career, furthermore enhancing the existing competences.  For this very purpose #STEMintheCity was born, consisting of technical, digital and soft skills trainings, hackathons, sessions for inspiring girls with tech role models, conferences and many other activities.  This is our way of bridging the digital gender divide: supporting every kind of initiatives that help girls and women to approach technology and increase their knowledge and confidence and overcome differences, prejudices and obstacls, promoting ICT as a way to lighten workload and reduce errors, monitoring women’s participation in the digital economy and promoting case studies about successful females.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/29/Bridging%20the%20Digital%20Gender%20Divide.docx) |
|  | December 27, 2017 | [Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Developmnent (BMZ)  (Germany)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=30) | [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/30/Online%20consultation%20on%20bridging%20the%20digital%20gender%20divide%20.docx) |
|  | December 29, 2017 | [Global Affairs Canada (Canada)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=31) | Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the main focus of Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy. This includes promoting equal access for women to capital, markets, digital technology and business development services. In addition, Canada is focused on using innovative approaches, which includes (but is not limited to) the use of digital technologies to support programming that addresses deep-rooted gender inequalities. This may include building digital literacy skills and using digital technologies to build self-confidence, increase independence and influence and make better-informed decisions; and enabling women to communicate with peers online, to exchange information and build solidarity and to lobby decision-makers.  However, while digital technologies have the potential to be used in transformative ways to empower women and girls and advance gender equality, they have also enabled new forms of violence against women and girls. Canada believes that advancing gender equality and bridging the gender digital divide must include promoting and protecting the human rights of all women and girls to access and use digital technologies without being targeted by online violence and abuse.  Canada believes that additional research on the effectiveness of gender-responsive policies in the area of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), including ones that address barriers to affordability, threats that hamper access and use, digital literacy and confidence, and the availability of relevant content, applications and services, could help inform evidence-based programs and projects.  Canada welcomes ITU efforts to overcome the Gender Digital Divide through these open consultations. It is a discussion that is long overdue and considering that the majority of the 3.1 billion individuals who remain unconnected are women, this is a topic towards which ITU should divert significant resources.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/31/Globalf%20Affairs%20Canada%20ITU%20submission.DOCX) |
|  | January 03, 2018 | [General Space Affair Management Office (Angola)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=32) | The General Space Affair Management Office of Angola, give his contribution for this topic by submitting the answers, according to the issues and solutions being studied in Angola.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/32/UIT_FINAL.docx) |
|  | January 03, 2018 | [ICANN (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=33) | ICANN is honoured to have the opportunity to take part in this important Open Consultation. It is also a timely consultation in the wake of an ever-increasing awareness of the economic and social costs of maintaining a gender divide. The approach taken in the consultation rightly moves on from just the participation of women and girls in the ICT labour market (though this of course is important) to explore their participation in decision-making processes, whether in the private or public sectors, that affect all of our lives. In terms of Internet governance, we hope this consultation, on bridging the gender divide, will enhance the role of women and girls in policy making processes at the UN, in IGOs, in governments, in the technical Community, in civil society and in businesses. There is a lot of work to be done.  ICANN, within the Internet Eco-system, has an important but limited role to play. We do though, in our policy decision making process with respect to Internet identifiers and the DNS, recognise the need to do more to encourage and foster the role of women and girls. The Survey (and Report) on Gender Diversity and Participation elaborated on below is a first, but significant, step in this process.  We look forward to discussion these important issues during the physical consultation in Geneva later in January.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/33/CWG%20open%20consultation%20-%20gender%20divide%20.pdf)  *COMMENT:*  *The UK thanked ICANN for their contribution and particularly noted the point made that not only is bridging the gender divide important, but it must be also be meaningful. Examples were provided during the panel discussion on the benefits to women and girls when they had access to ICTs especially in developing and least developed countries.* |
|  | January 03, 2018 | [Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=34) | BRIDGING THE GENDER DIVIDE  1. INTRODUCTION  This paper looks at the issues currently under consultation which include examples of good practices available to increase internet access and digital literacy for women and girls. Good practices that promote access and use of ITCs by SMEs, particularly those managed by women, available sources and mechanisms for measuring women participation in the digital economy as well as related policies.  While the developed world has made a lot of progress towards gender equality and empowerment, women and girls still suffer from various levels of discrimination. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and is also critical for a prosperous and sustainable world. It is also a key ingridient for the achievement of sustainable development goals SDGs.  According to the World Telecommunications ICT indicators data base 2016, ICT indicators for developed and developing countries and the world (totals and penetration rates), global Internet use has increased significantly over the past 10 years from 20.6% of the world online in 2007, to an estimated 47.1% in 2016. According to the ITU world facts, the global Internet user gender gap grew from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016. The gap remains large particularly in the world’s Least Developed Countries (LDCs), at 31%. In 2016, the regional gender gap is largest in Africa (23%) and smallest in the Americas (2%).  For Zimbabwe, According to the Country’s Census 2012 National Report, 8 777 094 people live in rural areas, while 4 284 145 live in urban areas. Of the people in rural areas, 4 390 228 are females, while 4 386 866 are males. According to an ICT access by households and use by individuals 2014 report produced by the Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office, in collaboration with the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), more than 60.18 % of the rural dwellers were found to have no access to a computer, the internet, mobile telephone and financial services, compared to about 20%, in urban areas. Accordingly, given that the majority of the female population lives in rural areas, not only the Urban to Rural Digital Divide, but also the Gender Digital Divide is wide.  One cannot dispute the potential of ICTs as a tool for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. However, with regards to ICTs themselves, the digital gender divide is also quite wide. It is necessary to bridge this gap for ITCs to make an impact on the general Digital Divide. Suggestions as to how, are contained under the consultation question headings in this Paper.  2. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to increase Internet access and digital literacy of women and girls, including in decision-making processes on Internet public policy?  The approaches and examples are outlined below:  • Embed ICT literacy training in early education systems that is, pre-school, primary and secondary education and then ensure that facilities that promote ITC learning and use are in place in tertiary educational institutions. The practice of introducing e-learning, particularly in schools can help. Examples of countries that have embraced the use of E-Learning include Senegal, Zambia, Somalia and Zimbabwe. For Zimbabwe the vision is to implement e-learning in 9000 Government owned schools starting with 1300 which are being connected to the internet currently. The Private schools are already doing a good job of embracing e-learning.  • For grown up women who have missed the ICT boat during their formal education a good approach is to ensure that they use basic ICT resources available on everyday gadgets like mobile phones.  • Providing computers for use in the activities of women in social communal clubs.  • Introducing ICT access points at the grass root level in the communities. Examples are India’s public libraries and Zimbabwe’s ICT Community Information Centres where people including women running small economic projects can access ICT equipment and the internet at very affordable charges or for free.  3. What approaches and examples of good practices are available to promote the access and use of ICTs by SMEs in developing and least-developed countries, particularly those owned/managed by women, in order to achieve greater participation in the digital economy?  The approaches and good practice examples include the following:  • To have good ICT infrastructure in place for easy and wide uptake of broadband services  • To encourage and promote technology transfer  • Introduce incentives for investment in ICTs, such as tax holidays  • Build confidence in the use of ICTs through cybersecurity in order to ensure protection of trade secrets , intellectual property and consumer protection  • Waive import duty on ICT equipment. Zimbabwe waived import duty on laptops and this saw most SMEs managing to buy computers for their businesses. A number of ICT companies headed by women also came into operation. Other examples of countries with Zero duty on laptops are Sri Lanka, South Africa and Israel.  • Incentivise e-procurement, as the benefit of reduction in leaks in revenue encourages uptake of ICTs  • Provide relevant content for SMEs. In some cases women and women owned businesses may not embrace the use of ICTs because of lack of relevant content. It is therefore necessary for Policy makers to ensure that appropriate content is developed and made available.  4 . Which are the available sources and mechanisms for measuring women's participation in the digital economy with focus on SME's and micro-enterprises?  • Incorporate questions to determine the extent of ownership of ICT gadgets such as computers ,smartphones, radios and television whenever a national population census is conducted  • Carry out regular surveys on access to ICT by gender  • Carry out survey using public statistical institutions to determine the number of women managed institutions that use computers and ICT applications to manage any and/or all aspects of their businesses. Zimbabwe has adopted this approach and it has helped establish the extent of the digital divide in the country  5. What measures/policies could be envisioned in order to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs, specifically in developing and least-developed countries?  Intervention needs to be at education level as well as business level and suggested measures/policies are outlined below:  • Affirmative action in university intake of women both for business classes and ICT degree programmes. The university of Zimbabwe adopted this and the uptake by girls increased  • Developing countries should share best practices among themselves and with the Developed countries  • Multi-stakeholder cooperation involving Government, inter-governmental organisations, the private sector, academia and nongovernmental organisations will help find sound solutions.  • Introduce incentives for the girl child to take up science and ICT related subjects, that is, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and eventually careers. Zimbabwe’s STEM programme has made a difference.  • Policy consultations should involve gender activist organisations that have sufficient knowledge of gender needs.  6. What are the gaps in addressing these challenges? How can they be addressed and what is the role of governments  • Prohibitive costs in developing infrastructure which then limits access , particularly by rural communities  • Culture, particularly in some African countries where women are expected to stay pregnant and in the kitchen  • The content found on the internet may not be relevant to what the women are interested in  • Most people feel more comfortable accessing information in their mother language. Information accessed on the internet is generally in English or a few major languages which are foreign to developing countries  • ICT training is offered by private colleges, which are often very expensive. For Zimbabwe concentration on ICT training is generally in universities, which means that those who do not get a chance to attend university remain with no basic ICT training  • ICT Gadgets are expensive and most developing countries generally do not manufacture gadgets, thereby having no choice but to import at high prices.  The Following is what Governments can do:  • promote investment in ICTs so as to drive costs down  • Have government institutions that offer ICT training at affordable rates to SME employees  • Come up with a sound research and Development as well as innovation policy.  • Improve ICT network infrastructure so that investment becomes cheaper for the SMEs  • Run e-business awareness programmes  • Encourage use of e- transactions at the local levels.  Zimbabwe is one country where more than 80% of the local financial transactions are now electronic. One of the reasons for this was the need to relieve pressure on the country’s cash resources which made the drive by Government to promote e transactions through public media vigorous. This was also supported by the publicity surrounding the country’s pipeline legislation on electronic transactions, cybersecurity and Data protection, which allayed the fears of SMEs and the general public on the security of e-transactions. To ensure that even women running market stores were not left behind, Point of sale machines were made widely available. Currently the informal sector and people’s markets, use not only point of sale machines, but internet transfers and mobile money, extensively. Point of sale machines are even made available temporarily at weddings and house warming parties or any other function where monetary gifts may be offered by attendees.  7. Conclusion  It is clear that there is no single method that can effectively bridge the Gender divide. If however most of the proposals proposed in this paper which include investment in infrastructure, embedding ICTs in education systems and women related affirmative action in ICT training and education are used, significant inroads will be made. Working closely with organisations that work with women and promote the interests of women will also help as such organisations are better placed to identify the needs of the female Gender. A multi-stakeholder approach when setting policies is recommended in order to achieve buy in, by women and girls to any policy changes. It is also important to look at good practices across the world so that measures that work in one country are shared, customised and utilised by other countries.  *COMMENT:*  *One member state made the following comment with regard to this online submission:*  *“We welcome many of the recommendations provided by Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe in particular with regard to creating an enabling environment to facilitate telecommunications investments. However, we question the pertinence of the recommendation on technological transfer as ICT technology is typically owned by the private sector and such a recommendation is not one that could be in fact easily implemented.”* |
|  | January 04, 2018 | [Department of Communications and the Arts  (Australia)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=35) | The Australian Government believes that women should have equal opportunity to access and make the most of the digital economy. Australia has implemented a range of policy initiatives and development programs, both domestically and internationally, with the aim of bridging the digital gender divide. Australia recognises that governments need to work in partnership with businesses and the community to bridge this divide.  The Australian Government is investing in a variety of policy initiatives and development programs to enable women and girls to improve their digital literacy and participate in the digital economy. The Government is investing in a digital technologies curriculum as well as a grants program to foster women and girls’ participation in science, technology, engineering and entrepreneurship sectors. Bridging the digital gender divide is not just about skills and access, but about supporting women to have meaningful careers, especially as digital entrepreneurs and as leaders in the digital economy. Australia is strongly committed to being at the forefront of efforts to ensure the digital economy equally benefits women and girls, with opportunities and resources to reach their full potential.  Women’s participation in the digital economy is only possible when they feel respected and safe in the workplace and online. The Australian Government provides a range of services and initiatives to raise awareness, to assist women and girls to be safe online and support victims of gender-based violence through digital technologies.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/35/January%202018%20-%20Australia%20Submission%20-%20CWG%20Internet%20Open%20Consultation.pdf) |
|  | January 04, 2018 | [Association for Proper Internet Governance (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=36) | We note that several of the contributions state the providing affordable access and security (including data protection) are key elements in bridging the gender divide. We trust that that will be reflected in the summary report of the open consultation. We note with regret that relatively few of the countries that proposed the theme of this open consultations actually submitted contributions. |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [Access Partnership (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=37) | The WSIS Coalition is an industry group representing major global ICT companies involved in many aspects of the Internet ecosystem. We affirm our commitment to bridging the Digital Gender Divide and through effective cooperation with governments, the private sector, civil society and multilateral organizations, aim to convert this shared commitment into action.  In our submission, we reiterate the critical actions laid out by the Action Plan to Close the Digital Gender Gap, which was launched by WSIS+10 in 2015:  1. Developing gender responsive strategies and policies.  2. Ensuring access to ICTs by women and girls and addressing the factors that hinder their use of technology.  3. Building the digital capacities of women and girls.  4. Promoting women in the technology sector, particularly in positions of decision-making.  5. Establish multi-stakeholder partnerships.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/37/WSIS%20Coalition%20Response%20to%20CWG%20Internet%20Consultation.docx) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [ITU-APT Foundation of India  (India)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=38) | Attached  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/38/Responses%20on%20bridging%20the%20digital%20gender%20divide.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [CAICT (China)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=39) | The goal of SDG5 is "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Currently, in most developing countries and the least developed countries, the gender divide of access and use of internet is still prominent. Concerning this subject of open consultation, China has taken the suggestion into consideration from the following four aspects are some considerations on bridging the gender divide and promoting women's participation in the digital economy including the role of ITU, strengthening the construction of information infrastructure, protecting women's rights and urging women to participate in the digital economy and initiating women’s interests  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/39/Open%C2%A0Consultation.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [World Wide Web Foundation/Alliance for Affordable Internet (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=41) | Better broadband policies offer a clear path to improving women’s internet access and use, and to moving forward toward universal access goals. However, our recent research of 58 low and middle income countries national broadband policies indicates that only a handful of governments have taken any action at the policy level to advance true progress toward closing the digital gender divide. This finding reflects the very limited progress that has been made since previous assessments (most notably those by the Broadband Commission in 2013 and the Web Foundation in 2014) which revealed similarly serious shortcomings in advancing women’s opportunities for online access and use. Without a specific focus on improving access and use opportunities for women, policies will continue to exclude half the population. Creating a more accessible and empowering internet for women requires policy that focuses on a number of key areas, easily remembered as R.E.A.C.T: Rights, Education, Access, Content, and Targets.  In addition to developing policies that focus on rights, education, access, content, and targets, as outlined above, it is critical that women are included in the actual policymaking process. Policy designed for all citizens — and particularly policy focused on affecting women — should be designed with women, and governments must work to secure women’s participation in the policymaking process. In many countries, women’s organisations have made significant contributions to incorporating gender perspectives in policy across various sectors such as health, education, and the environment. Unfortunately, this is not the case in many other countries, where women’s voices are left entirely out of the policymaking process. It is now time for governments to take responsibility and immediate action to maximise the benefits of the internet and emerging technologies for all people.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/41/A4AI_ITU%20Gender%20Digital%20Divide%20Consultation%20.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [UNESCO (France)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=42) | Enclosed, please find the response from UNESCO.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/42/UNESCO%20ITU%20Gender%20Consultation.docx) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [ESOA (Belgium)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=43) | The following comments are submitted on behalf of ESOA members. ESOA is a non-profit organisation established with the objective of serving and promoting the common interests of satellite operators from Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the CIS. Satellite communications contribute to bridging the Digital Gender Divide by bringing education to rural areas or refugee camps, enabling digital financial inclusion or allowing citizens to participate in democratic elections.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/43/ESOA_ConsultGenderDivide.pdf)  *COMMENT:*  *One member state made the following comment with regard to this online submission :*  *“We particularly wish to welcome the contribution by ESOA. When policy makers and most stakeholders think about issues such as closing the gender digital divide, we do not often think to turn to the satellite industry or see a correlation between their actions and improved connectivity for women. Yet, at the heart of closing the divide is the need for telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and this is where the satellite industry has a key role.”* |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [Global Partners Digital (United Kingdom)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=45) | In this consultation response, we identify a number of barriers which prevent or limit women’s access and use of the internet, as well as digital literacy more broadly, and make a number of recommendations as to how they can be addressed. In particular, we focus on six key barriers: (i) cost/affordability; (ii) a lack of technical/digital literacy/skills; (iii) poor infrastructure, quality or coverage; (iv) harassment; (v) a lack of relevant content/lack of time; and (iv) a low level of women’s participation in internet-related policymaking and the technology sector.  We also note that the digital gender divide is both a symptom and a cause of the underrepresentation of women in internet-related policymaking and the technology sector. We therefore set out a number of specific steps that existing policymakers should take to help ensure that internet-related policies tackle, rather than ignore or exacerbate, the digital gender divide.  Finally, with respect to the role of governments, we consider that in addition to the specific barriers identified, there are three broader issues which need to be addressed, and where governments have a specific role: (i) tackling gender inequality more broadly, (ii) collecting better and gender-disaggregated data, and (iii) ensuring that ICT-related policies are developed through open, inclusive and transparent processes.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/45/ITU%20CWG-Internet%20Consultation%20on%20the%20Gender%20Digital%20Divide.pdf)  *COMMENT:*  *One participant made the following comment with regard to this online submission:*  *“We agree that ICT-related policies must be developed through open, inclusive and transparent processes. It is surprising that many states that have advocated that approach, are instead now calling for E- Commerce discussions to take place in WTO, or in plurilateral forums, that are not open, not inclusive, and not transparent. Consequently, we call on those states to withdraw from such discussions until the process is changed to be at least as open, inclusive and transparent as that of ITU, UNCTAD, and other UN agencies.*  *Regarding Global Digital Partner's Framework for Multistakeholder Cyber Policy Development, we do not agree that all stakeholders should have equal roles in decision-making. We believe that the roles and responsibilities outlined in the Tunis Agenda must be respected and that states have the final responsibility for making public policy decisions.*  *Further, if industry is allowed equal decision making-powers, then it will never be possible to make key decisions, such as network neutrality regulations, because some portion of industry will block any such decisions.”* |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [US Department of State  (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=46) | Access and usage of digital tools empower women and girls by providing essential information and services for health, safety, education, and economic growth opportunities. The lack of access to the Internet and basic digital skills limits women’s ability to participate in the digital economy, obtain good education, access healthcare services and participate in the civil discourse. The United States believes that without major changes in policies concomitant with a significant increase in investment many of the benefits of technological changes will be out of the reach of women, thus potentially exacerbating current gender inequalities.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/46/US%20Contribution%20Open%20Consult%20Gender.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [Psychology Institute - UnB (University of Brasília) (Brazil)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=47) | The conceptual survey is anchored on the need for understanding of the reasons why, in general, men and women are well-defined career choices which can be understood as a gender construction linked to the absence of models or even taken decision that characterize these choices as a vocational option and based on skills that, in theory, can be developed or learned by men and women, boys and girls. Therefore, you have to that change is inserted through teaching strategies in the context of primary and secondary education, with proper planning to set learning objectives and in view, therefore, to their level of complexity to better adapt the technique teaching.  It is observed that, of the five cases chosen as examples of good practice, three are focused on academic learning, all use the teaching process focusing on the student, and the teacher more as a supporter of the learning experience and enlightening questions and advisor. The other two other cases, one is based on the construction of a public policy of government, but does not, however, the consequences of this policy in terms of effectiveness. Furthermore, when considering the question of ownership of equality for economic, exclusively, there is huge possibility of failure in isolated such policies, given that economic inequalities are increasing and universal and are directly related to the unequal distribution of capital .  In turn, it is understood that forums such as the Women in Information Technology (WIT), the SBC initiative, are important, but not sufficient if we consider that gender issues are elaborated in the symbolic reality and that reality has interface with the culture, values and beliefs. Thus, such events open public space for debate without, however, being a transformative process. Interesting that these forums are promoted by the students who went through the experience in academic level, not as a single space of speech, but speech with results that can be improved. Thus, we believe that the debate on gender diversity in the technology sector should be focused on educators and researchers in the social sciences.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/47/Contribution%20to%20the%20Public%20Consultation%20on%20ITU%20Gender.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [CUTS International (India)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=48) | Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS International, www.cuts-international.org) is pleased to respond to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) - Council Working Group (CWG) Consultation Paper on Bridging the Digital Gender Divide, as a part of the International Internet related Public Policy Issues.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/48/180501_ITU_BridgingTheDigitalGenderDivide_CUTS%20International.pdf)  *COMMENT:*  *One member state made the following comment with regard to this online submission :*  *“CUTS is absolutely correct in noting the direct correlation between digital inclusion of women and growth in GDP. It makes economic sense to close the gender digital divide and we thank CUTS for reminding us of this fact.”* |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [National Committee for Information society (Saudi Arabia)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=49) | Please find our contribution to Bridging the Digital Gender Divide in the attached file.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/49/Bridging%20the%20Digital%20Gender%20Divide.docx) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [Centro Internacional de Investigación Científica en Telecomunicaciones, Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones (CITIC) (Ecuador)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=51) | Telecommunication, ICT sector is one of the lowest participation of women and it is for this reason that we have a special interest in joining the objective of ITU to create an environment that empowers girls, young women and women with the use and appropriation of ICT.  El sector de Telecomunicaciones y TIC, es uno de los que menor participación de mujeres tiene y es por esta razón que tenemos un especial interés en sumarnos al objetivo de la UIT para crear un entorno que empodere a niñas, jóvenes y mujeres con el uso y apropiación de las Telecomunicaciones y TIC.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/51/Bridging%20the%20Digital%20Gender%20Divide.pdf) |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [General Secretariat For Gender Equality (Greece)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=52) | Actions that can promote the participation of women in technology and entrepreneurship  1. Developing a common definition and understanding of what digital skills and competences are.  2. Improving the understanding and definition of digital skills needs.  3. Upgrading the digital skills of the labour force with a focus on professional-related digital skills.  4. Overcoming the obstacles and/or limitations some people face to obtaining digital skills- including lack of interest, awareness, resources and/or knowledge, as well as fear of technology.  5. Providing relevant digital skills training opportunities for all.  Actions that will enhance the role of women in the field of technology and STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), either as an employee or as an entrepreneur  1. Making the ICT profession more attractive as a career choice, with a focus on encouraging more women to participate.  2. Increasing the number of young people trained for ICT professions (ICT graduates and conversions to ICT).  3. Ensuring certification and standardisation.  4. Improving managers' digital skills or so-called "e-Leadership" skills.  5. Upskilling of ICT professionals in a life-long-learning perspective.  6. Strengthening collaboration across relevant stakeholders  Training actions to support the entry of women into the labor market on equal terms regarding ICT skills and competences needed.  1. Provide the adequate ICT environment where teaching and training will be in close relation with the labour market.  2. Up-skilling of digital skills should become a target for the educational and VET curricula.  3. All the changes should be aligned with a Future need skills regional approach.  4. Strengthening collaboration across relevant stakeholders.  Regarding specific skills that could support the entry of women into the labor market and/or the improvement of their positions these include:  • Management of IT  • Basic ICT skills  • Advanced ICT skills  • Internet applications for networking and cooperation  • Technical skills  • Web page design  • Programming and software development  Especially for women aspiring to become entrepreneurs, specific skills are required which will enable them to promote online their products/services, to collect customer insight, and target specific audiences through the use of social media:  • Social media marketing (e.g. Blogs, Microblogs, Social Networks, Media-Sharing Sites, Social Bookmarking and selection Sites, analysis Sites, forum and effective Worlds).  However, in order for digital skills to be effectively implemented they have to be accompanied by generic competences such as:  • Effective communication skills  • Problem solving skills  • Teamwork skills  The above conclusions and recommendations were elaborated during the implementation of the project “Innovation and Employability for Women (e-Women), financed by the Financial Mechanism (XM) of the European Economic Area (EEA) Period 2009-2014, controlled by the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (Greece's Ministry of Education) from January 2016 to March 2017.  The project’s goal was to determine the status of technology in terms of participation and awareness among women, particularly young women in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the benefits arising from their use in the field of employment. The General Secretariat for Gender Equality was one of the project's 5 partners.  For more details please see the relevant website <http://www.iewomen.eu/1_2/ieWomen> |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [International Network of Women in Engineering and Sciences Europe (United Kingdom)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=53) | INWES-Europe is a network of European women working in STEM is a regional group of the International Women’s Network of Engineers and Scientists.  Good practices in order to reduce the gender divide in internet access include role models, coding classes, equal opportunities for job progression. Learning ICT skills through a variety of ways including gaming needs to be recognised and adapted to ensure girls are included, as cultural and personal preferences may affect the uptake.  International organisations and governments should work together with women networks in order to support women in SMEs, through mentorship schemes, financial support, facilitation, and recognition of individual time management needs and business risk-attitude cultural approaches.  The gender divide should be monitored at local, national, regional and international level and robust mechanisms should be develop to that effect.  The role of government and international organisations is key to the bridging of the gender divide. Through the development of appropriate policies, including regulations to protect women online against harassment and cyber-crime, women in STEM and ICT, entrepreneurs, and in SMEs should be supported.  Women networks are key to achieve this objective, through the development of programmes and projects, connecting women through events, informal meetings, social media, and being a voice for women at all levels will allow to support this key agenda item. And of course, men need to support these networks and gender diversity in order to ensure a sustainable success of these actions.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/53/ITU%20Consultation%20on%20Gender%20Divide%20INWES%20Europe%20response.pdf)  *COMMENT:*  *The UK government presented this response on behalf of INWES.*  *The UK then took to the floor to share some of the initiatives they are doing domestically in addressing the digital gender divide. The UK is happy to share the website links on these initiatives*. |
|  | January 05, 2018 | [Association for Progressive Communications  (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=54) | The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the work of the ITU Council Working Group-Internet (CWG-I) Open Consultation on Bridging the Digital Gender Divide.  APC considers the gender digital divide as both a symptom and cause of violations of women’s human rights. It is a symptom, in that the discrimination that women face on the basis of social and cultural norms is one of the most pronounced causes of the gender digital divide. To put it simply, all disparities in internet access are situated within other disparities that women face in society, be they based on location, economic power, age, gender, racial or ethnic origin, social and cultural norms, education, or other factors. These are causes of violations of women’s human rights, because the internet can be a critical enabler of human rights, and the gender digital divide leaves women who are without meaningful internet access less equipped to exercise their human rights and participate in public life/society. Barriers to women’s meaningful access to the internet are multifaceted, and include:   * Availability (e.g. women have no broadband access, public internet centres are in spaces that women do not usually have access to, etc.) * Affordability (e.g. insufficient income to pay for data, cannot afford a device, etc.) * Culture and norms (e.g. boys are prioritised for technology use at home, online gender-based violence, restrictions to movement, etc.) * Capacity and skills (e.g. gender literacy gap, lack of skills and confidence to access the internet or explore technology, etc.) * Availability of relevant content (e.g. language issues, lack of content that speaks to women's contexts, gender-related content is censored/restricted, etc.) * Women's participation in decision-making roles pertaining to the internet and/or in the technology sector (e.g. when women are not able to pursue careers in science and technology, when their participation in relevant policy-making forums is restricted).   Given the range of barriers contributing to the gender digital divides outlined above, and the fact that barriers to women’s meaningful access to the internet are deeply rooted in cultural norms and values, we encourage the ITU to focus its efforts on barriers that fall within its remit, such as availability and affordability, as well as increasing women's participation in decision-making roles within the ITU itself. All efforts by the ITU to increase affordable and meaningful access to the internet should integrate a women’s rights perspective. More specifically:   * First, we encourage the ITU to increasing women's participation and leadership in decision-making roles within the ITU itself.  We echo the recommendation in ARTICLE 19’s report around the need to establish a clear and accessible anti harassment policy.  Richard Hill provided some suggestions for increasing gender equality within the ITU and delegations that warrant further discussion. * Second, all efforts by the ITU to increase affordable and meaningful access to the internet should integrate a women’s rights perspective. The discussion of women’s meaningful access to the internet should not only happen during a consultation on gender issues, but should be part of all discussions on access in the ITU and elsewhere. * Third, given the broad range of barriers contributing to the gender digital divides, we encourage the ITU to focus its efforts on barriers that fall within its remit and expertise, such as availability, affordability, and capacity building. * Fourth we encourage the ITU to work with other stakeholders, including civil society and women’s rights groups, and other agencies and initiatives, such as the IGF Best Practice Forum on Gender and Access, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Women, and others.   We also include recommendations for States in our submission around collecting gender disaggregated data, national broadband strategies, public access, local access initiatives, and technology-related gender-based violence.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/54/APCSubmission_ITU_BridgingGenderDigitalDivide.pdf) |
|  | January 07, 2018 | [ARTICLE 19  (United Kingdom)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=55) | ARTICLE 19 welcomes the efforts of the ITU and its Council Working Group on International Internet-Related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet) to engage in a multistakeholder process by holding this Open Consultation.  Generally, digital divides are gaps between individuals, households, businesses, and geographic areas that are at different levels, whether socially or economically, with regard to their opportunities to use, develop, and benefit from the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs). The gender digital divide is both a consequence and cause of systemic violations of women’s human rights, both online and offline. It is a reflection of existing realities: the discrimination and marginalization that women face in society--not only on the basis of gender, but also through compounding factors rooted in location, economic status, age, racial or ethnic origin, and education--yield barriers to using, developing, and benefiting from the Internet and ICTs. Fundamentally, it is the free and full exercise of human rights that determine our ability to use, develop, and benefit from these technologies.  This submission responds to two of the five questions provided in this open consultation.  In response to Question Five, we assert that although infrastructural access remains a major challenge to bridging the gender digital divide, technology-related violence against women that exists even when women are able to access the Internet and ICTs remains a major issue that is not yet sufficiently addressed by relevant stakeholders. In response to this gap, these stakeholders should adopt a human rights framework in considering the gender digital divide.  In response to Question One, we contend that to ensure the opportunities necessary for women to use and benefit from the Internet, the spaces in which Internet-related policy and standards decision-making occurs must be upheld by structures that deliberately foster and encourage the inclusion of individuals that have been disproportionately disenfranchised from access, including women. Specifically, we note the anti-harassment measures undertaken in recent years by the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (​ICANN​) and the Internet Engineering Task Force (​IETF​). The initiatives taken by these respective communities serve as examples from which other bodies, including the ITU, can draw.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/55/ARTICLE%2019%20CWG-Internet%20Open%20Consultation%20Submission%20Bridging%20the%20Gender%20Digital%20Divide.pdf)  *COMMENT:*  *One participant made the following comment with regard to this online submission:*  *“We agree that the human rights framework must be considering when addressing the gender digital divide.*  *We invite all concerned parties to formulate provisions specific to telecommunications that could be added to the ITU Constitution, in particular to strengthen privacy and freedom of speech. A specific proposal can be found at:*  [*http://justnetcoalition.org/2014/on\_UN\_HCHR\_privacy\_report.pdf*](http://justnetcoalition.org/2014/on_UN_HCHR_privacy_report.pdf)*”* |
|  | January 08, 2018 | [International Development Research Centre (IDRC) (Canada)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=56) | Digital technologies - the Internet and mobile phones among others - are vital for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The Networked Economies program of Canada’s International Development Research Centre has supported research that has demonstrated that under the right conditions, digital technologies contribute to achieving the SDG targets by fostering economic growth, improving governance, and delivering better outcomes in education and health.  At the same time the positive effects of digital innovation can be too easily counteracted by technologies’ role in amplifying economic and social inequalities. For instance, women and girls in the developing world often do not have the skills to use, nor equal levels of access to, digital tools. This not only entrenches the significant wage gaps that already exist, but also means that women will struggle to harness 21st century employment opportunities as more jobs move online. A deeper emerging problem is that women who do acquire online skills and access often face severe harassment – as targets for online “trolls” who seek to shame, taunt and marginalize female voices. The digital bias is compounded by the fact that women are underrepresented in fields such as computer science and engineering which shape the design of technologies. Ensuring women contribute in these spaces means technological innovations will be designed with their needs in mind, for instance to counter bias or harassment, to provide information on better sanitation, or to support flexible work.  The goal of the NE program is to understand how digital innovation in developing and middle income countries can support inclusive economic opportunities and democracy. The program aims to deliver on this goal by improving the governance of cyberspace; connecting people in the global South to the online sphere and economic opportunities; and by testing and scaling digital innovations to improve entrepreneurship, education, and democracy.  The program aims to support better gender-related outcomes through technology and development in three related areas:  1) Enhancing pro-women policies and rights online;  2) Improving governance and creating economic opportunities that empower women by testing and scaling digital innovations; and  3) Improving access to technology and the skills needed to create and innovate.  This document outlines current projects that support these efforts to support the achievement of SDG 5 through the Internet.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/56/Empowering%20women%20through%20the%20Internet_Jan2018.pdf) |
|  | January 08, 2018 | [EQUALS Global Partnership (Switzerland)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=59) | This input is a contribution to the open consultation from EQUALS, the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age. The contribution is based on the data received from a mapping conducted within EQUALS of close to 500 initiatives working on gender digital inclusion. The attached PDF is presented to support the questions under discussion in this Online Open Consultation. Further information about EQUALS is available at [www.equals.org](http://www.equals.org).  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/59/1801%20Input%20EQUALS%20Action%20Map%20CWG%20Internet%20Consultation.%20v4.pdf) |
|  | January 10, 2018 | [Research ICT Africa  (South Africa)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=60) | Research ICT Africa and its new African Digital Policy Project believes that evidence-based policymaking is crucial to not only overcoming disparities in Internet access among men and women in Africa and beyond, but also to ensuring that the Internet can be a force for sustainable development. Our work has indicated that women’s ability to access and use the Internet depends on a number of interrelated barriers that are inextricably rooted in socioeconomic circumstances. Approaches and examples of good practices to increase Internet access therefore tend to be ones that take due cognisance of women’s unique contexts and circumstances.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/60/CWG%20Gender_draft%20submission%2028112017.pdf) |
|  | January 11, 2018 | [Internet Society (United States)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=61) | The Internet Society (ISOC) is pleased to participate in the CWG-Internet Open Consultation on “Bridging the Digital Gender Divide. This is an important discussion given the tremendous progress that still needs to be made to increase Internet penetration rates amongst women and girls, and to close the wide geographic and regional disparities that exist between women and men in Internet access and digital literacy. As the Internet Society’s recent Global Internet Report: Paths to The Digital Future shows, new digital divides are emerging and one of them is a gender divide. According to the ITU, there are 250 million fewer women online than men. In this context, consultations such as these are important to exchanging of ideas and information amongst diverse stakeholders to find solutions and develop concrete actions to close the gender digital gap.  ISOC´s contribution focuses on 4 main areas to address the gender digital divide:  *1. The important role of public and private sector investment to improve access for women to the Internet and empower women in the digital age.*  Public and private sector investment in initiatives aimed at empowering women and girls in ICTs are an effective approach to support and increase Internet access and digital literacy amongst women and girls. ISOC supports the ITU EQUALS which is intended to promote gender equality and mainstreaming in technology. ISOC joined the EQUALS partnership and is participating in issue formulation, advocacy, networking, good practice guidance, capacity development, and programme work. In addition, ISOC’s Beyond the Net Funding Programme, which is a membership grants program, supports local initiatives that empower women. Since the start of the program in 2015, ISOC has supported more than 12 projects to empower and engage women and girls in ICTs across the world. Projects—like a Digital Citizens Fund in Afghanistan, the Lebanese Alternative Learning, and Hamara Internet in Pakistan—are pushing the definitions of global technology toward inclusivity, safety and integration in ways never before seen.  *2. Strategies for greater inclusion of women in decision making processes.*  As regards the inclusion of women in decision-making processes, the Internet Society supports the Internet Governance Multistakeholder approach where all stakeholders with a vested interest should participate on Internet policy matters. Ensuring that there is greater gender balance in the decision-making processes demands proactive steps that encourage more women to participate, consider leadership opportunities and build the capacity of women with leadership and decision-making skills. In this context, ISOC administers several fellowship programs for its members to increase the capacity of next generation of leaders in Internet Governance. Cultural, geographic and gender diversity is encouraged and are key considerations in the selection process for all fellowships.  *3. The power of role models*  Women in ICTs and leadership roles serve as effective role models that showcase the potential and success of women, and encourage more women and girls of the to follow in stride. Greater visibility of women in these leadership roles and women in ICTs has an empowerment effect. ISOC developed the #Shinethelight, which is a social media campaign showcasing women stories and promoting empowerment through different leadership examples of women who are using the Internet to innovate and make a difference in their countries.  *4. Policy approaches that foster the role of women as entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs*  For entrepreneurs women, there are many barriers that needed to be overcome. The lack of policies that address women's availability to become entrepreneurs, the lack of skills and confidence to develop their business and the existence of threats to safety concerns are just some of them. In this context, there are many policies that need to be developed to foster the role of women as entrepreneurs:  • There should be balance policies that allow women to compete. Access to financial resources and capital to develop businesses especially for women in developing and least- developed countries, presents barriers for women to create businesses. Measures are needed to provide funding to qualifying women entrepreneurs.  • Policies and industry laws create a more equitable ecosystem and playing field for women entrepreneurs to compete and thrive.  • Celebrate women leaders and entrepreneurs to send the message to other girls and women that women are capable leaders and that they can become entrepreneurs and managers of their own business.  [View submitted document](https://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/61/Internet%20Society%20Contribution%20to%20the%20CWG-Internet%20Open%20Consultation%20on%20_Bridging%20the%20Gender%20Digital%20Divide__01_11_18_EN.pdf)  *COMMENT:*  *One participant made the following comment with regard to this online submission:*  *“While we agree that all stakeholders should have an equal voice during consultations on Internet policy matters, we believe that, in accordance with the Tunis Agenda, states have the final responsibility for making public policy decisions.”*  *For example, network neutrality regulations could never be agreed if industry has equal decision-making rights, since, because some portion of industry will block any such decisions.”* |
|  | January 15, 2018 | [Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mauritius)](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet/Pages/display-oct2017.aspx?ListItemID=62) | In Mauritius, there is no gender disparity against girls in primary and secondary education. Based on 2014 statistics, academic performance of girls in all 3 levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) are better compared to boys. Moreover, the enrolment for students at tertiary level shows a widening gap in favour of girls.  Since our education curriculum is actively introducing ICT throughout the school life of a student, this results in an increased number of school leavers who are well trained to fit the sophisticated digital world.  Work environment has greatly evolved with the introduction of new business technology such as video conferencing, social networks and virtual office technology. Both gender are equally exposed to such technologies.  Moreover, technology can be considered as an industry by itself. Software development or development of mobile apps and BPO are major sectors that could be exploited for the employment of women, if they are given the appropriate level of training and support.  Technology can also contribute significantly through deployment of online course. This means of training is a valuable/cost effective method for continuous education with minimal impact on active work/family life. It promotes flexibility and adaptability.  Moreover, with the aim to further bridge the gender divide, IC3 & ICT Awareness courses are provided to Women Associations of different regions across Mauritius, through Women Centres, Social Welfare Centre, Women Empowerment Centre, Youth Centres, etc  Transformation of certain industries from a labour intensive work force to a motorised/automated environment has resulted in less physical effort but more technical know- how on the machinery operation, which placed man & women on level playing field. With the opportunity to manoeuvre motorized tool, women now have the possibility to join these sectors.  Given the multiple roles of women in society, working remotely/working from home could be considered as this will allow women to balance their work and family priorities. Adoption of this concept would also encourage women to enter the labour market through jobs like translators/Document editors or entrepreneur and small home office businesses.  Furthermore, social media can be used as a powerful marketing tool which consequently increase product/brand visibility locally, regionally and internationally, resulting in expansion of business for women entrepreneur.  Laws, policies, and procedures that promote gender equality should address barriers to women and girls’ access to technology and unlock opportunities and send positive messages to women.  [View submitted document](http://www.itu.int/en/Lists/consultationOct2017/Attachments/62/MTCI-%20itu.docx) |

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