Turning the Tide for Women in the Pacific

Nadi, Fiji, 17 Nov 2014 – Sixty-five participants from Pacific Island countries as well as from Asian countries gathered for a one-day *Women with the Wave High Level Forum: Turning the Tide for the Pacific.* The Forum enabled participants to share and exchange experiences and good practices on promoting women's economic empowerment through gender-responsive and inclusive environment and workplace practices, facilitated by media and ICTs.

The Forum was co-organized by the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and hosted by the Fiji Ministry of Information.

Participants represented policy makers, regulators, ICT and media service providers, academia and national, regional and international organizations. They endorsed the Outcome Statements issued by the Women with the Wave Forum on Digital Inclusion of Women and Girls (Oct 2012; Seoul, Republic of Korea,) and the Women with the Wave: Diversity Media and ICT (Oct 2013; Hanoi, Viet Nam), and recognized the discussions on gender equality in and through the media in the Women With the Wave (October 2014, Macau).

They called on industry leaders, governments, organizations and citizens of the Pacific islands and their partners to accord high priority in their agendas to: (a) promote equal representation of women in industry workplaces and in the airwaves; (b) portray women in a positive and non-stereotypical manner and as role models across all forms of media and technological platforms; (c) provide women access to affordable and accessible ICTs; and (d) address specifically the challenges and needs of women and girls in rural areas.

The Nadi Participants agreed on the following 6 urgent action points to address the unique challenges and circumstances of the Pacific Island countries:

1. Enhance the understanding and knowledge about gender equality and women's economic empowerment by:

   a. Collecting, analyzing and disseminating sex disaggregated data for all Pacific island countries. This would involve working with governments' information departments, national statistics offices, regulators, policy makers and telecom operators as well as social media platforms.

   b. Carrying out action research on gender stereotypes in media to change mindsets and perception about gender roles and responsibilities by working closely with families, schools, communities, church and other religious groups and media and broadcasting organizations.

   c. Collecting women's stories on how ICTs and media made an impact in their lives and share them widely, including on the www.EmpowerWomen.org's iLearn platform.

2. Build women's capacity to fully use media and ICTs for their economic empowerment by providing them with relevant capacity building training opportunities involving relevant ministries and local governments, academia, CSOs (including The Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organizations), development partners and the private sector.

3. Ensure that equal opportunities for women in hiring, retention and promotion within the media and ICT sectors, including by encouraging companies to sign the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs), adopting internal score cards for monitoring and evaluation of results and showcasing good practices on www.EmpowerWomen.org/business-hub.

4. Promote women's and girls' equal and affordable access to ICTs, including by ensuring proper assessment of their needs and by utilizing existing infrastructure in rural areas of schools, community centers and telecenters and provide special arrangements for their specific needs.

5. Empower and encourage girls and young women to consider studies and careers in the growing field of ICTs, including by encouraging all stakeholders to organize events to celebrate International Girls in ICT Day on the fourth Thursday of April every year. Utilize the resources available on ITU Girls in ICT Portal at www.girlsinict.org for exploring ICT opportunities for girls and women.

6. Promote safe and secure usage of ICTs and media by establishing and enforcing cyber security national guidelines by relevant ministries, regulators, education system and communities. If required, refer to the ITU child online protection guidelines for parents, children, schools, and industry.

7. Address the high costs of the internet by establishing strategic partnerships with the private sector and other funding organizations and the issuance of appropriate government policies and regulations.

The Forum expressed its appreciation and thanks to ABU, ITU and UN Women for bringing the Women with the Wave Forum Series to Fiji with the view to "Turning the Tide for the Pacific".

The Women with the Wave Forum: *Turning the Tide for the Pacific* materials are available at: ITU and UN Women.