

FINISHED COPY

ITU REGIONAL FORUM FOR EUROPE ON MEANINGFUL CONNECTIVITY

MARCH 9, 2021

Services Provided By:

Caption First, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3066  
Monument, CO 80132  
1-877-825-5234  
+001-719-482-9835  
[www.captionfirst.com](http://www.captionfirst.com)

\*\*\*

This text, document, or file is based on live transcription. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), captioning, and/or live transcription are provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. This text, document, or file is not to be distributed or used in any way that may violate copyright law.

\*\*\*

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Ladies and gentlemen, it is 10:02. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to all of you following us today for this special session on the report on Women, Girls & ICT in the context of COVID-19 in select Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership Countries. In the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. This is it in the framework of the 2020 regional forum for Sustainable Development for the U.N. ECE region and the ITU Forum for Europe on Meaningful Connectivity which started yesterday.

I'm Jaroslaw Ponder, and as head of the ITU office for Europe it is my great pressure to be a moderator of this special event today. Before we're starting our session, I give the floor to our technical moderator who will share with us some housekeeping information.

>> Thank you for joining. I will be the remote participation moderator for the event.

Before starting the meeting, I would like to give you instructions on the Zoom platform and the meeting. The meeting is entirely remote and you are kindly asked to switch off the microphone. Also the moderator of the session will address the speakers and will give you the floor when your turn comes. You may use the chat for

comments and questions. Please include your name and affiliation for making it easier for the organizers. Moderators will be monitoring and any comment may be read out if time allows.

When the floor is open to the audience, please raise your hand to request the floor. The raise hand function is located at the bottom of the participant window. To access that window, click the participant button on the bottom part of the Zoom interface.

You can view and activate captioning by clicking on close caption on the bottom of the Zoom interface. We kindly ask you to display your full name and affiliation if possible. Incomplete, suspicious information could cause you to be removed from the meeting room.

The room is recorded, and the recording will be used for report writing and communication purposes.

Thank you very much.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you for this information.

Now I invite Her Excellency, State Secretariat of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of Slovenia, also the host of the forum as well as the U.N. General Director for Europe and Central Asia and all speakers and moderators for the special session today which we'll have the pleasure and to hear from shortly. I would like to inform you that the meeting is live streamed and this special is available for all audiences through the youth channel as well as on the Twitter account at ITU Europe.

We would like to start the event by welcoming a special video message from the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau Doreen Bogdon-Martin who is not able to join us live today.

If the technical moderator could kindly play the video, I would be grateful.

>> DOREEN BOGDON-MARTIN: Yesterday's International Women's Day celebrations reminded us yet again that women need to be full and equal partners in our global digital transformation. Yet, right now we still are facing a significant digital gender divide with an average of 52% of women offline compared to 45% of men.

COVID-19 did not cause gender inequality, but it has certainly served to exacerbate it. Women are being impacted disproportionately. They are more likely to have lost their jobs, more likely to have lost opportunities for learning and more likely to lack access to the connectivity and digital skills that could help them better weather the storm.

At ITU we have been working to turn our commitment to digital gender equality into action. For more than ten years now our annual day in ICT day which inspires girls and young women to embrace a digital career is now celebrated in over 170 countries. The Equals global partnership has grown into a network of over 100 organizations worldwide. Our EQUALS EU group is working hard to promote gender equity and social innovation, drawing on the energy, expertise and enthusiasm of the 19 organizations from 15 EU Member States and associated countries. Our new network of women programme will promote more gender balanced participation in our upcoming World Telecommunication Conference that will take place in November later this year.

As knowledge is power, we have joined forces with U.N. Women to look at women, girls and ICT in the context of COVID-19. This new study identifies key factors and trends in the participation of women in the digital sector as a national level, and it also includes a number of clear and implementable recommendations. Encouragingly, it indicates that our message around digital skills has been getting through in the European region with young women now comprising over 40% of university graduates in STEM-related fields in the countries that we profiled. It also points to a worrying bottleneck with women's participation in the technology sector.

Still remarkably, I believe we will pay a high price if we do not take urgent action to redress our chronic failure to attract young women into the world's fastest growing sector. I urge all stakeholders to step up collective efforts to ensure that women get their chance to play an equal role in developing the technologies that are increasingly shaping our lives and our societies.

I warmly thank the U.N. Women team for their invaluable collaboration, and I look forward to working with the ITU's Member States, private sector members and partner organizations to implement these recommendations. As we move forward toward the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2021 now is the time to take bold steps, bold steps to ensure that girls and women everywhere enjoy the fruits of the digital revolution. Only by working together will we reach our goal of true digital gender equality.

Thank you.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Following this special message, the importance of access to ICTs for Women and Girls worldwide, it is my great pleasure to welcome the U.N.

Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia to deliver opening remarks.

>> ALIA EL-YASSIR: Partners, colleagues, participants, all:

It is a pleasure to come in after such an inspiring welcoming remarks and also joining in welcoming you all to today's event. We really feel this is an important conversation and we thank you for being part of it.

As was mentioned, yesterday was International Women's Day, using this opportunity to wish us all a happy International Women's Day and remember that across the world the events celebrating this day were issuing for increasing women's leadership and representation in public life. This is maybe especially relevant in the context of COVID-19, as the growing body of evidence is showing us that the pandemic and its projected repercussions are expected to have a disproportionate impact on Women and Girls.

For us to figure out the solutions to the problems, we need to make sure that Women and Girls and more diverse groups of Women and Girls are leading and engaging in decision making and in public life. Now more than ever if we hope to have a more equal, more just, more secure future for all we need accelerated action to achieve gender equality by 2030.

We all know that the cut-off date for the achievement of the SDGs is only nine years away, and now more than ever we're facing challenges to achieve gender equality, even more challenges than those that we highlighted a little over a year ago during the Beijing+25 regional review that was held in Geneva in 2019.

We feed collective efforts more than ever. This is why the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development is so important and why these kinds of discussions like the one we're having today are needed to really pinpoint what those accelerated actions that are needed are, and how we're going to make them happen.

Technology, I think we can all agree has great potential for ensuring faster and fuller promotion and enjoyment of all Human Rights, including women rights. It really can be that gamechanger for Women and Girls. It can make this century the century not only for the fourth industrial revolution but also the revolution for Women and Girls rights. If Women and Girls everywhere, especially those that are minoritized, underrepresented, do not have access and control and full use of technology they will simply be left behind and we will have failed in our

ambitions for sustainable development.

It is an urgent agenda now more than ever as COVID-19 has led to significantly increased dependence on the use of information and communication technology for work, for school, for social activities as well as political engagement. This is something that we all can relate to. If preCOVID we had a gender digital divide, now we must recognize that this divide is likely to grow. This is what we have heard from our partners across the region when we spoke to them in the aftermath of the COVID-19 becoming a pandemic to understand the gendered impact. We're sharing that loud and clear, especially where Women and Girls don't have access to mobile phones, computers, internet, even the skills needed to use them effectively.

It has life-saving implications. We can wonder how many deaths could have been avoided if there was better access. How many more survivors of domestic violence could have been supported, and how much faster can recovery from before launch of the pandemic be if we close the digital gender divide effectively.

Front of mine as we move to digitalization and as reminded in the Beijing+25 regional review, technological change is not gender neutral. We must remember that Women and Girls are facing heightened exposure to violence and abuse in technology-enabled spaces. This is something that we have to take very seriously and we need to take it to heart as we discuss how we move forward responsibly.

We know it is a serious deterrent to many Women and Girls, including taking on leadership roles and engaging in public spheres. This is one of the issues that's being highlighted during the Commission on the Status of Women that's taking place very soon. Actually concurrently with the regional forum. We hope that the discussions today can feed into that global discussion and go beyond just the regional discussion we're having here.

We really need to work collectively, collaboratively and responsibly to make sure that we understand all aspects of the issues when it comes to addressing the digital divide. As we're doing this, again, to link with these global initiatives that are happening, we have a wonderful opportunity to connect with other initiatives brought together to bring about desired change. The first part will be kicked off in a forum that's happening in about 20 days in Mexico City at the end of the month, and then there will be the second part that will be taking place between the 30th of June and 2nd of July kindly hosted by an ECE Member State France. It was supposed to be held in person,

but will likely we'll have to leverage information communication technologies and there is great opportunity for engaging.

We really believe that through cocreation and including diverse groups, making sur that we're really inclusive in the consultation, in this forum, in all other forums, when we bring together the advocates, the activists from across the globe and those decision makers from the public and the private sectors, having multistakeholder discussions that we can make the aspirations of generation excel to a reality. It is a global movement calling for this urgent action, calling for greater accountability on gender equality, and we're really happy to partner with ITU in this initiative, in this conversation today because it also is a part of the global initiative. They are one of the leaders of the action coalition on technology and innovation for gender equality. We're also really encouraged to having Armenia and Finland collectively working.

We're now looking to increase the membership, we want more of you to come onboard as commitment makers. It can be as Civil Society activists, as youth-led organizations, private sector entities, as governments, to make game changing commitments. We have to close the digital divide. We have to make sure that Women and Girls from all groups are represented. We have to make sure that innovations that are gender responsive are supported and very importantly funded when we have to make the digital space safe for all, not least Women and Girls. We're launching findings of the joint study of ITU today and we're very happy with this partnership and we really want to hear your views, how to fast track progress to overcome the structural obstacles, the discriminatory norms that are holding us back. What do we expect to communicate into the regional forum, into the global discussions on the CSW and the generation equality initiative?

I want to reiterate that every country, every Civil Society organization, every private sector company, every single one of us as an individual can lead change, can help in closing the digital gender divide and as we make sure that innovation and technology are catalyzing the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals. Within our solutions, Women and Girls must be equal partners in the digital sector as innovator, developers and users, decision makers during and after the COVID-19 era.

Let's build a more equal future together.

Thank you very much.

Over to you.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you very much for this opening remarks.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, It is my great pleasure as an ITU representative to launch together with the U.N. Women and just one day after celebrating the International Women's Day the study on the Gendered Digital Divide: Digitally Empowered Generation Equality in the wake of COVID-19. When we first started discussion was the colleagues from the U.N. Women and EQUAL, we knew that COVID-19 widened the digital divide even further when it comes to Women and Girls and why the study focuses on the digital divide occurring in five Western Balkans states, and three Eastern Partnership countries, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova. The study aims to identify factors and trends in the participation of women in the digital sectors in education, courier and entrepreneurship at the national level.

This study, it was developed under the umbrella of the regional initiative for Europe within the framework of accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and Sustainable Development. We at ITU are deeply committed to implementing this objective as a means of paving the way to Sustainable Development and achievement of the SDGs, in particular SDG5 on gender equality and SDG10 on reduced inequalities.

I would like to thank again U.N. Women and Equals for their excellent cooperation in bringing this study to life today.

I would now like to introduce Ms. Ajda Cuderman from Slovenia to give her opening keynote.

Her Excellency, the floor is yours.

>> ADJA CUDERMAN: Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I'm proud that Slovenia cohosts this important Regional Forum for Europe on Meaningful Connectivity. I was even more delighted when I got a chance to address you today for this very special event on digitally empowered declaration on equality. I had a chance to read the ITU and U.N. Women digitally empowered generation opportunity report that identifies key factors and trends in the participation of women in the digital sector, as I read in education, career, and entrepreneurship, I'm convinced that our countries will importantly contribute to foster participation of Women and Girls in the ICT sector.

A little bit about Agenda 2030 and Slovenia: We are in Slovenia committed to all 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda,

which is considered to be the most comprehensive development action plan thus far. Slovenia has engaged with the opportunity to prepare its own national review and participate at the high-level political forum with great determination twice far, in 2017 I think and in 2020. The 2030 Agenda and the voluntary national review process call upon us to see where we stand, what's been done in the last years and what challenges we have to tackle to move forward to prosperity and well-being for everybody.

For Slovenia, the preparation of the first national review had another significant reason: On the basis of this review, Slovenia prepared a new National Development Strategy and aligned all 17 sustainable goals of the 2030 Agenda with our national priorities and our national targets.

Now, you asked quite specific questions, and we and myself looked into it to be able to give you more exact answers on how or what concretely are we doing and share some success stories for everybody. Now, Sustainable Development Goal Number 5, this is gender equality, this is of the utmost importance in my opinion. My country, I am very proud of it because we have one of the lowest average gender-based gaps in the E.U.27, this is -- the employment inequality and gender equality, it calls on a continuous whole government approach with legislative instruments to keep away interest discrimination based on gender. In the public sector we're seeing a lot of equal opportunities and really, really small gaps because we can influence with laws and regulations very good how this gaps between women and men are let's say seen and carried out.

Slovenia started the activities of gender mainstreaming at the government level in 1997 with the pilot project and committed to implementation of the gender mainstreaming in 2002 with adoption of the act on equal opportunities for women and men. The gender equality policy of Slovenia carries out concrete measures and activities to improve the position of women and men in those areas where they are discriminated in comparison with the other gender on the other. This policy area has been managed through national programme for equal opportunities for women and men between 2015 and '20 and in 2020 Slovenia started drafting a new national programme that will identify our key goals and measures for ensuring gender equality for the period for the next 10 years from 2020 to 2030. The previous programme, the new programme will introduce measures for ensuring economic independence and eliminating all forms of violence against Women and Girls,

promoting and ensuring gender balance, eliminating gender stereotype and combating sexism, eliminating inequalities in the health of women and men and measures for integrating gender equality and strength strengthening the role of women in foreign policy and international development.

In private sector, still -- and I come from the private sector where I have worked for over 20 years, women still remain in the minority in the leadership positions in the private sector and the percentage, it is slowly increasing, the share of women in leadership positions has been gradually increasing since 2012. Today women take up 26% of leadership in Slovenia which is considerably more than the E.U. average which is only 18%. That's 10% more or almost let's say -- 70% more than the E.U. average, however it is still not 50/50 what we hoped for when we talked about this programme in 2016.

In 2019 the manager association of Slovenia, it is the largest association of managers in Slovenia, they started a campaign to make the gender quota in management, and supervisory boards so that Slovenia companies would be mandatory, still it is mandatory, but not a lot of women choose to be there. Guidelines for employers were prepared and several workshops were organized in order to address this problem in practice and to eliminate the obstacles identified in several studies.

Now, if we look at some of the challenges that governments face when implementing STEM programs for girls, despite the efforts today women's and girls continue to face the gender-based barriers preventing them from accessing and utilizing technology and digital use, girls are five times less likely to consider a career in technology than boys. However, when they are there, they are highly valued and highly successful and we have proven that in Slovenia in engineering profession. At the same time 90% of jobs worldwide already have a digital component, and digital literacy has become almost as important as traditional literacy. With the government, we must therefore equip the girls and young women with digital skills through prioritizing education in ICT subjects. Only this way the girls will thrive in economy where is routine work has been automated and digital skills are prized.

The number of women in Slovenia pursuing the STEM science engineering and mathematics careers is considerably low, it is still not there where we would want it to be, however 20% or more of women which start this also become a Ph.D. and highly valued internationally or globally, for

example going on with a little bit of data, female students in healthcare and shelter care studies account for as many as 76% of students and represents 66% of students in social sciences by contrast, only 50% of students in ICT studies were women in the last ten years. The reason for this can be found in gender stereotype, but also in lack of promotion, lack of support, I believe showcasing and celebrating role models, especially women in this field, it is an important way to change this so that also proves that marketing today is most important when talking about how to raise awareness in girls and women and I have two daughters myself, to be able to do anything they want.

Every year Slovenia celebrates the role models from STEM through significant event, day for girls and engineer of the year and we especially praise the women engineer with awards and write success stories for them. That's proved significantly to raise enrollment in the University from young girls in the last two to three years since that programme was going on.

Last but not least, I would like to address creating a safe environment for Women and Girls, technology, internet, great enablers for girls, at the same time, we must be well aware of the threats as well. First, lack of skills ; second, lack of opportunities, discrimination and digital violence can have also a long-lasting negative effect on girls. Bullying on social channels, through LinkedIn is something that's still very present and we should have zero tolerance on that one.

Finally -- okay, I know I have been long, so really excuse me, but I'm really enthusiastic about this topic -- I would like to share a personal story with you. I, too, am a woman that started her career in sales and management consulting, then I went on in ICT sector, went in engineering business, let's say, and indeed I know the challenges and the struggles. I always said guys, do I have to do another university to prove that I understand engineering? This was my common phrase so I understand all of the efforts that we have to do to become successful at our jobs. I also think that women have a lot of opportunities that modern awareness brings us.

My personal experience, however, it is that I am lucky to live in Slovenia because this country really, really put lots of efforts to give women lots of opportunities, excitement to be a manager, mechanic, et cetera, however for girls, it is matter of upbringing. I mentioned I have two dare -- two daughters myself, one son, I see more and more parents saying girl, you can do whatever you want, the

social mention is already there, the gap of everybody speaking before me, you know, in some job positions this is a matter of a transition period which is taking really longer than we all hoped for obviously. The biggest stretch in reducing the gaps you talked about, it is not in my personal opinion awareness, lack of law, lack of opportunities, only seeing COVID-19 situation proved to me personally that it almost drove me nuts because I was working from home, helping my three kids with school, taking care of home ICT, doing breakfast, lunch, dinner, cleaning, everything, taking care of the dog, my parents, that means that the biggest threat for success of women in managerial positions or anywhere, it is our selves because we put a lot of pressure on ourselves. We're daughter, sister, we're mother, we're wives, we're grandmothers, we are having full-time jobs and we still have to prove ourselves heavily to be respected and that is wrong, but we're coming home to have everything under control and that is our next job, taking care of everybody, the neighbor, mother, fathers, grandmas, it is the next job, we're always under pressure by our self, tired, exhausted, but fulfilled, burned out a lot of times. I personally believe women have to become easy on ourselves. We still have to remember that we're equally capable as men, not all jobs -- you know, have them move things for us but we have to have the confidence to say it loud and not prove it all the time because this is costing us our energy and our abilities. Respect for ourselves and the confidence to say I am worth the same money as men, I'm as capable as men and I don't have to prove it. You have to find out. To prevent our burnout, which also I believe is arising in the last ten year, especially for women. Devoting special attention to this field, it is what my team and I strive to design, economic entrepreneurial public policies that include instead of exclude programmes that protect, not threaten and initiatives that empower instead of leave behind.

We women have to have a huge and extensive respect for ourselves as mentioned and respect for others, also for our next generation men who can fully support us and become an equal partner.

Thank you for your attention and I wish everybody a fruitful event ongoing.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you very much, Excellency, for this inspiring keynote. You touched a lot of items and you provided definitely the example of the role model which we need in our environment and the environment of the

digital space which a lot needs to be done in order to ensure the gender equality. We're counting on your constant support, also during the times of the presidency of the Slovenia presidency of the E.U. Council in the next coming months.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we're all gathered here today to launch this study, it is now time to hear from the Women and Girls themselves on the findings of the report and their stories in the next session moderated by Ms. Belma.

>> BELMA: Don't even try! It is Belma!

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Madam Belma!

>> BELMA: Thank you!

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Women rights advocate with experience in NGO, business, private sector who is currently the community manager in one of the most prominent IT companies in Bosnia -- in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The floor is yours. Handing over to you.

>> BELMA: Thank you. Thank you to all of the speaker who is are giving speeches before me. I love you so much! I love Slovenia! I'm so excited about your passionate speech, Ajda, and I agree, I need to meet you one day hopefully.

Hello, everybody. As Mr. Ponder had already said, good morning, good evening, good afternoon wherever you are in this world right now. I will also use this opportunity regardless of the fact that it is 9th of March to say happy International Women's Day! Happy, healthy, strong International Women's Day to all of you girls and women out there. In the next 25 minutes our agenda is a bit late already, but I don't mind, because some very valuable, interesting points are said today, I have an immense pleasure to speak with three fantastic young women that will give you their perspective from their own viewpoints and their own daily work from field on this report.

Welcome to the first part, setting the context, of the launch of the report. It is important to say this report is a result of join efforts of ITU, U.N. Women and EQUALS global partnership. It focuses on women, girls and ICT and five Balkans countries, as Mr. Ponder already said, and the eastern countries. As we have very little time I would like to give space immediately as I have already said three fantastic women today with me. Hello, welcome.

We will talk about a report and best practices and recommendations that can be used stemming from your own viewpoints, starting with Andreea Barbu from Romania. Hello, welcome.

>> ANDREEA BARBU: Thank you.

>> BELMA: A journalist for several media outlets and she's also a technical writer for the start-up fin tech OS. She's also the creator of website Armenia Tales.

I would like to hear from you two things: One, it is in our preparatory meeting to this event you said that the report is very thoroughly and well written, and that some of the recommendations from the report are already being successfully applied in Romania and that it can make sense for other countries in the report, and also if you can reflect a bit on statistics in work spaces and digital work spaces.

I will start with semi sad fact from Bosnia and Herzegovina as I learned yesterday, out of more than 700 IT companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina we have only three CEO, what are the numbers there?

>> ANDREEA BARBU: The numbers are not clear regarding the leaders that are women currently working right now. We do know that 1 out of 4 employees is a woman and while reading that report, the statistic, the data from these eight countries selected for the report does mirror the situation in Romania. We have 30% of women working in ICT sector and what I like to draw upon your attention today is particularly the third chapter of this report, which talks about gender equality at the workspace and it identifies the challenges that women are facing.

Particularly, for all of these eight countries, they suffer from brain drain, gender gaps within the industry, a shortage of qualified worker, lack of minority ecosystems, meaning that companies have not yet a culture that supports the acquisitions of women employees and moving down further to the percentage of women actually working in STEM environments, it is very, very low for this region. In particular we see from the report Bosnia and Herzegovina with 29%, we see north Macedonia with 27% and we see Serbia with 14%, we see Ukraine, 24 out of which half of our QA engineers, and we see Georgia which sadly has the lowest percentage, 12% of women working in this sector. Moldova is actually the country that is looking very well on this chart with 31%.

This situation is similar for Romania with around 20% employees being women and it is also valid for the company I work for.

Moving on further to the topic of women leaders, the statistics are even more -- even more alarming because the numbers diminish with the women being founders or leaders, for example, we have a 19% of women managers in Montenegro

so we don't see women being encouraged to take on loan, funding companies, it is hard for women to provide the money to start a company, be a founder. They may have the brilliant idea, connections to do it, they may have the solid business plan, but for these women, it is very hard to acquire funding because, first off, they are not allowed to take -- to take mortgage loan, so secured loans in order to fund their ideas because they lack property. And particularly in the report, it mentioned Georgia where women do not have a lot of property so they cannot take a secure loan to fund their ideas.

What I adore about this report, they also talk about angel investors, so women investing in other women. Sadly, there are, there is very little data concerning how many women are actually investors and investing in women-owned companies.

The report, it says 15% of women have lost their jobs during COVID-19 and 41% could not pay their monthly expenses. Coming back to probably the most important part, as you were saying, it is the recommendations and yes, it is true, some are actually already implemented in Romania, and particularly concerning women, that's the work life balance. The report says that nowadays the benefits that are given by companies should be targeted it towards women and that's very true. For example, in-house, at home childcare and a generous parental leave, in Ukraine, it is actually a very happy country because it has a company called Intelose, it has implemented this kind of benefit, and in Romania right now, we do not have such benefits quite implemented as well as in the Ukraine.

We do offer as of this month the state offers funding for children to go to kindergarten so it is an immense help 90s.

Coming back to the parental leave, it is not very generous in Romania.

Moving on further to another recommendation, the report says that there is no exact data for the gender situation, meaning that within the percentage you have seen in the report it also includes jobs from communications, from call centers, which are not technically an IT job because you're not producing software. Actually the numbers from the report, they're even smaller for the actual women who are creating software and who are testing software and producing them.

Lastly, another recommendation I would like to mention, it is offering women the upskill and programmes to evolve. Obviously some of them may have graduated from an

ITU University but because technology is constantly changing and there are new softwares coming out every day women still need to upskill and to improve their knowledge. In Romania, this has been implemented very well, companies offer in-house trainings for their particular software, and they also offer as a benefit another online platform that the employees, men or women can use to evolve further on.

>> BELMA: Thank you so much.

I would like to see you go from technical writer from a start-up to actually owner of start-up in a few years in our next conversation.

There's a question in the audience wrinkles can we find this interesting report, you can find it on the IT web and I kindly ask the moderator, technical support -- there you go. Thank you so much!.

From Romania, going to Albania, she's European youth envoy for generation connect at ITU, same as Andrea, she's a business intelligence specialist in Albania, also as of this year, this is one of the companies that has female CEO which makes me very happy and goes in line with everything we're saying today. Which recommendations from the report may work in Albania and why, and before you link the recommendations from the report with statistics in Albania, I would like you to tell us your personal story and the importance, what does have to do with this report?

>> ALJONA AVDO: Hello, everybody.

During COVID-19, I think everybody started to rethink their life. I was reading the report, I thought I was reading out loud what I had been thinking this month and what I have been through all my life. This report, it has information about girls since they are very young in school and then in the work life. Linking everything with my life I decided to tell my story.

When I left for university, ICT was not my first choice. As I read in the report, people put on barriers around us and we have to fight to get out of the borders. A girl can be an economist, a doctor, maybe a pharmacist, but no one mentioned nothing about technology. IT was for boys. That was all I knew, but I decided to learn more about it on my own. I wanted a chance to start ICT school and do my thing that was a beautiful normal, but not exactly.

My confidence wasn't very high, because I didn't know anything about programming, and then my family was afraid I would be the only girl in my class, even worse, friends and other people who kept saying that even if you start there, the boy also be better than you and you won't finish school

or fine you do, no one will hire you.

Yes, this scared me. I'm so happy that it didn't stop me. Keeping this short, yes, there were a lot of boys in my class and some were better than me in some subjects. In the end, I think it is the school, I had the chance to start a master's of science degree and started a good job while some boys still haven't finished school. End of my story is just to point out that there is another division in boys and girls, anyone can become what they want and get the best of this life, just keep going. I shared my story because as in the report, it all starts when subjects are divided in girls and boys. There's a lot more of what I see every day in Albania. During the COVID-19, girls had difficulties to learn because many of them didn't have a phone, even if they do, it is in someone's supervision. With the lockdown, working from home, women had to share device was their children and had to take more greater domestic or caregiving responsibilities. It made me very sad that we were in the same conditions but with more responsibilities.

Talking about my recommendation, first I would like to say that I'm very happy that the girls in STEM related degrees have increased numbers in Albania. I'm so happy to say that the work in the communication company has been for 7 years, this sounds like hope to me. This is a way we're fighting the inequality and breaking borders others created.

There are many recommendations in the report and I would like to underline some of them, firstly, girls have hard times starting a job, so in STEM in recent programmes for girls, it would be very helpful, then the work life balance becomes very difficult as in Albania, boys are raised by the less and the women have to do the housework and take care of children. This will require some years to get fixed, but some things for work life balance, by the company they work for, it would be simple. When I said to boy, a good way to do so, it is the balanced number of women and male employees so that they will somehow understand the equality between them.

This is all I've got prepared for you. I hope that you read the report and that it shoes many things that I found myself good.

Thank you very much.

>> BELMA: Thank you very much. I thank you for your personal story. I also hope to see you as CEO one day. I'm happy that you have a female CEO right now.

Going back to my neighborhood in Bosnia and

Herzegovina, welcome!

A computer science engineer with the background in programme management, and she's IT girls project officer for U.N. Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina and pretty much a local rockstar when it comes to women's empowerment.

Now let's talk about STEM education and how one of the loudest, brightest, most fabulous initiatives by U.N. Women Bosnia and Herzegovina IT girls initiative is doing their activities now in the wake of COVID and how we can go back to our report and somehow link it to the recommendations that were given in report.

Also, very important part, I think we had already mentioned, have to do with cyberbullying, gender-based violence that's in digital spaces which also IT girls initiative took into consideration while making your own curriculum and agenda. Welcome.

The floor is yours.

>> ZERINA MANDZO: Thank you for the amazing word. I want to send greetings to all audience and the panelists watching us on behalf of this project. Really being here today, discussing this topic, it makes me immensely happy because as you probably -- as everyone know, the digitalization, it is really all around us and it is entering every single sector and we may start it with (audio issue). Ending our day with a smart IT solution and I strongly believe that ITU Europe, U.N. Women, Equals already made a huge step really by publishing today's report and discussing this topic.

The reasoning under this statement, it is that we, in IT girls initiative, we really believe that in order to change the situation across our countries or in our countries we really must search for barriers, only after proper identification we may search for the response of these identified barriers.

With the support of U.N. Women HQ together with our local partners and internationally recognized behavioral inside experts from June of 2019 U.N. Women conducted a research into girls and young women's choice architecture when it comes to education and career choice in ICT or STEM fields. Behavioral science really reveals that even a small change to have a message, a choice, how it is framed, how a process is structured, it can have an out sized impact on basic decisions we make and the actions basically we take.

The research, this research basically took place in the three major regions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, primary and secondary schools as well as University and it was the

first time basically to research into girls and women's choice, architecture using the behavioral insights and it was a novelty but most probably for Bosnia and Herzegovina. While I'm mentioning this, it is because some of these key findings are used in ITU research and for example 33% of girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina think that their family would not encourage them to take up University studies in the field belonging to STEM domains.

What is scary, male students, they are really convinced that marriage is extremely stressful when both husband and wife are employed, the family will suffer when mother works and that the mother should be present at home when her children come back home from school, that mothers should put their careers on hold, when they start having families, et cetera.

We strongly believe that every single person has his bubble of people, and why am I calling it a bubble because we are all surrounded by essential let's say close friends and if we change the behavior, the views, the thoughts of one person from that bubble we may change the whole bubble in I don't know N some specific let's say timeframe. We also have the report that makes me think about recommendations produced by ITU, U.N. Women and EQUALS. This brings me to the COVID-19 pandemic which really has had an impact on our work with girls and women in social distancing and somehow the restricting of our physical contact with them and basically this made us explore new ways how we can -- how we can reach basically girls and continue encouraging them to think about education and careers in ICT. What's important to say, it is that basically technology is the one which basically allow us to maintain communication, continuing education and business and really creating opportunities for personal development. Inspired by this IT girls initiative, the IT girls go online campaign where we organized 13 free webinars in the range of six weeks where we wanted to present Cybersecurity, how to protect yourself online, graphical -- graphic design, project management, all varieties of topics in IT because we really wanted to show that IT is really wide sector and a lot of girls can basically find their interest in it, we reached -- it is more than 20,000 live views on Facebook and more than 300 people, it was individual accounts on Zoom platform.

At the end of the day basically the message is that we received from girls who were inspired by our webinar, it was the best of our success, and then there is one important part, as we try to moderate more girls to enter

ICT, we really must think about all the challenges they face online and the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in kids and teens using digital platforms not just for personal use but for educational purposes as well and for many young people social distancing guidelines means the only content that they will have with their peers that will be done basically virtually. As a young -- as a result, young people are using online communication platforms more frequently than in the past. As schoolwork has moved home, Bosnia and Herzegovina, so has bullying and harassment, according to new studies there has been I think 70% increase in the cyberbullying in a few months. That's basically the reason why we organized many awareness raising events, including parents, children as well because in Bosnia and Herzegovina it shows that more than 60% of parents do not know what their kids are doing online.

A lot of events were organized basically to outline what is online violence, how basically to recognize online violence; and last, but not least, how to report it. We even include cyber therapists to discuss this topic. And in the end, as I previously said, as we tried to encourage girls to enter the STEM field, we have to think of their security online, and we have to think about their access to let's say online world, especially these countries that ITU report is basically mentioning where socioeconomic situation is so much different across countries, and we have to close this digital gender, we have to think about innovation solutions, and I think today we made a really, really huge step in achieving these.

>> BELMA: I absolutely agree. Thank you so much.

I'm so sorry, sad that we are up with our time as the agenda has already been a bit late. I would like to thank you all for today's conversation, but also being a part of young women that are changing the statistics for the better. I would also like to thank ITU, U.N. Women and EQUALS global partnership for making this important report, you can find the report on ITU website, use it as a tool for further lobbying, equality starts with providing the same starting points for everyone and here is hoping that all of our future generations will have the same starting points.

My name is Belma.

Back to you. I wish you all a fantastic day ahead.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you for the moderation, thank you to all of the panelists.

Let's move to the next panel where we'll be exploring some of the concrete steps to deliver transformative change

for Women and Girls using ICTs with particular focus on the Europe region. Today I'm joined by the five excellent panelists who will bring us insight from the government, private sector and the academia. I would like to welcome to this panel a member of the parliament of Georgia, she is an innovation, technology champion that served as a deputy Chairman of Georgia innovation technology agency and was involved in the innovation policy deliberation while working at the World Bank.

Welcome to the international relations manager at the GSMA responsible for coordinating GMA strategy across various gender initiatives in the digital space and welcome to the founder and CEO of next billion, a for-profit for impact start-up with an infinite mission to raise the visibility of 1 billion women in business. Welcome also to other speakers, the CEO and cofounder of business risk, a company helping organizations create sustainable diverse and inclusive workspace culture in the Nordics as well as finally Amelia, assistant professor at the faculty of electrical engineering at the University of Vienna, the head of public, private, people partner in the digital innovation hub.

Today we're looking for concrete steps to deliver transformative change for girls and women in Europe region. This was the purpose also of this study, to move things in the region and to help at the national level and to drive a bit of dynamics in this industry.

Let's start with our government representative to give us an overview.

You have the floor.

>> MARIAM LASHKHI: Thank you to the organizer force the excellent event. It definitely is emotional to hear from such an inspiring female representatives in the previous session and also the moderators. Thank you very much for giving this opportunity.

I would like to ask the technical facilitator to open my slides. I would like to give before we start, as you correctly mentioned, I'm coming from -- I have the background of being from the government currently in the position of being a member of the parliament, but me, myself, by the education, I was an IT specialist engineer, I used to work as a developer as well and then moved to the government to support the innovation policy development and now I am kind of lobbying this from the mandate, from the regulatory mandate.

I would like to ask you to go to the next slide.

Before I start with the concrete steps, what Georgia

has successfully done, I would like to just give you a few facts and tell you that from the worldwide -- from 781 million illiterate people, two-thirds are women. This is -- we have to be cautious when talking about this and we have to take the attention to that. Also from the ICT workforce, 7 million people, 30% are women, from the worldwide global tech companies, only 6% of CEOs or board members are female representatives.

By the UNESCO gender equality, in the ICT opened up a market of 50 to 70 billion U.S. dollar market, so in our mandate, it is to give the open floor to everyone who are future female leaders.

If guck to the next slide.

We work like the opening remark speaker, we believe that SDG is definitely our agenda, definitely is, and especially the 5th goal for gender equality. We saw that the gender equality, gender empowerment is essential to expand economic growth and especially after the pandemic we saw that the ICT, not only the enabler of the works, but also new professions are being opening up and the current situation of the pandemic also kind of highlighted that there is a big gap in digital divide between U.N. Women and Equals the countries. Also we have to know, the work is 30% of women that work in the ICT sector, only a small portion are in the formal ICT. Please go to the next slide, please.

A few figures, and this slide, it doesn't seem to be kind of very intensive because this is one of the problems of our country of lacking the concrete and good statistics and we're working with the statistics office together with the U.N. organizations, we're also trying to harmonize Georgia statistics generation and census to the European one. As you know, we're associated member, so we're harmonizing the systems.

In Georgia we have been future ready, we have put some of the progressive steps forward. One of the important things that we highlighted, it is that we have introduced the regulatory incentives which is women in parliament and we're trying to advocate to transfer this good practice to the private sector as well and to have women in the private sector equal in this quota. We have also -- we have institutionalized the support as well and from the government organization, we're trying to advocate this vision.

Georgia is well positioned to take the advantage. We do have the high literacy and we have connectivity accessibility infrastructure and good coverage of internet

throughout the country and we have strong academic foundation and math skills and we're kind of famous in Soviet time because of our math skills, including female representatives. As for the female STEM college graduates, we have the statistics of 44% and it is rapidly increasing which is a good sign. Still in our mentality we do have the females that are from STEM fields and we're calling them that this girl is thinking like a boy, so this mentality, it is still kept in the country but this type of incentive, programmers they're changing the mentality as well.

Next slide, please.

With the next slide I would like to present the two concepts, the two concepts which are especially for the ones who think that female entrepreneurs, mom entrepreneurs, that it is not easy to balance. Those who do not know, the two concepts, one is the FemTech, female technology, the term applied to a category of software diagnostic products and services that use technology often to focus on women-related industry and women health. Especially this FemTech direction, we have female entrepreneurs representing, women know that they're -- know their problems and challenges. On the other side, I'm presenting the concept of mum-preneurship which is a combination of female, mom, enterprise, it is giving the opportunity to moms staying at home to work from home and to kind of come up with the new entrepreneurial ideas.

Next slide, please.

With the next slide, I have presented some of the inventor, female inventors with their FemTech inventions and I didn't know before the research that some of the various -- the very useful kind of products of our daily use were invented by females, for instance, the refrigerator, ice-cream maker, dishwasher, iron, so on, so forth, we do have the inventors, female inventors who just are sitting at home and looking at the challenges which were at home, they have come up with this invention.

Here is some FemTech companies, worldwide, you may see some that are familiar, some logos here and next slide, please.

With the next slide, I have just shown up a few applications which the Georgia female FemTech representatives have developed and this is also kind of rapidly going forward.

This type of opportunities has been opened through the governmental grant programmes. Through which we were able to fund or give the financing for the start-up for the

entrepreneurs who are coming up with this idea. Some of the dies, we have the virtual app in the fin tech industry, my Nanny, a popular application in Georgia, became very popular in Georgia and more and more are coming.

Next one, please.

With this, I want to just say that it is crucially important to help on one hand the enabling environment which is the joint efforts of governments, private sector, academic sector, others. Female entrepreneurship, the female founders increasing, when I started, we had up to 20% of the female founder start-ups, currently it is up to 40%, it is increasing.

A 38% of applicants are being female founders.

To become more kind of future ready for females I'm proposing especially two concepts to support the readiness, one is the incentives and an incentive, I'm saying the quotation which is a good practice which has been already implemented in Georgia and which is to scale up in every field and in every industry and on the other side the access to finance which is a key challenge for female entrepreneurs, it is important to have this methodology when getting access to the funding.

On the other side, there has to be a big scale of the projects, such as women in tech boot camp, women week, like March, it is intensive with women-related activities and it doesn't have to be only one month. It has to be throughout the year. Also the ICT trainings which Georgia recently started for advanced level ICT specialists and we saw that in the beginning around 29% of ICTs specialists who have been involved in this programme are female, but it is increasing through the awareness raising incentives. Next slide, please.

So last slide, last but not least, I would say are the key directions which we have to work together, it is connectivity and I'm sure that the U.N. and ITU are the very good and excellent platforms through which we have to increase the connectivity between each other, between the countries to bring the best practices and to have the joint implementation. This is very important. Sometimes we just see the good practice and it doesn't work like you cannot just copy, paste from one country to another. When will is the joint implication tool, an instrument, it is even better with this practice, it is even better implemented. On the other side I have a mention about the incentives quotes for womens with technologies and gender education. Gender education to give the opportunity to all participants to choose the kind of -- to choose their -- to

have the good information about the gender issues and on the other side awareness raising which is crucially important to have the awareness correct about females involvement in ICT sector.

This is it. I'm ready to answer the questions.

I'm very happy to be and honored to be on your platform. I hope I was on time.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you very much. Thank you for this insight in the FemTech and the presentation. We'll come back to you with the questions after the series of presentations and now I will turn to the person with two hats, bringing perspective of GSMA and the EQUALS global partnership.

So handing over to you.

>> TAMARA DANCHEVA: It is a pleasure to be here with you today. As you already alluded, I'm proudly representing GSMA, which in turn represents the global mobile industry, but GSMA also has a special place in the international digital equality technical space, and that is as Chair of the equals global partnership for digital gender equality, and Chair in particularly the Steering Committee. I'm very happy to wear my two hats today and share some best practices on behalf of GSMA because I think it is important to emphasize that we work across all four area, and that is access, skills leadership and research because we recognize that addressing the digital gender divide is impossible by just addressing or speaking for that matter around just one issue.

Now I have chosen today to give you two examples of concrete programmes that GSMA has been spearheading to showcase how we're making a difference.

If we could go to the first slide, please.

I think it is fair to say, I'm sure that all of you have recognized particularly during the pandemic that access to mobile phone can be a lifeline. Particularly for women and young girls who tend to be marginalized.

As such, of course, mobile phone can also provide access to critical services, not least healthcare and education. This is precisely what GSMA's connected women programme looks into.

It basically aims to understand and tackle the mobile gender gap in access. Of course, when it comes to access to mobile phones on one hand and also when it comes to access to mobile internet which once again can be critical, especially rural areas when you speak of this.

How does the programme do that? On the left, you see that there are currently two focus areas. We work to

reduce the gender gap as I mentioned in mobile internet, and those with mobile money, because that is becoming increasingly important again for ensuring that women are not left out of the digital ecosystem and for that manner, financial ecosystem as well. As mobile money is becoming more and more the primary way in which women can access the services.

What approach do we undertake? That you can also see in the middle column. That of course we -- first thing is advocacy we recollects try awareness of the issues we work closely with stakeholders. How do we do that? We share insights, we share data, the mobile gender gap reports which I'm happy to share a link to that, we build to -- work to build capacity and clear understanding of the barrier, challenges when it comes to both access to mobile phones and of course mobile internet, and of course to engage in policy-related discussions and today of course, it is one example.

We also drive our three peer headed approach to market engagement by which we work closely with the mobile industry, of course, to have a real impact on the ground. I'll give you an example shortly on the next slide.

We do that through our connected women commitment initiative which basically works with mobile operators to bridge the gender gap in their customer service and of course we also support them on the way to ensure that they're able to do that.

Finally through insights where we develop insights and thought leadership on the size of the mobile gender gap and the main drivers around that. Now, what is the ultimate goal, right, of the desired outcome, first we want to ensure that women have access and increase that access because it is not only enough to ensure that women have access to mobile technology but of course it is subsequently how they're using that mobile technology. Secondly, of course, we're working to drive growth of the mobile industry itself because we recognize the potential that closing the gender gap has to support the economy more broadly. Of course of which the mobile industry play as very big part because we know that connectivity is becoming a critical, crucial enabler of economic activity worldwide.

Finally something that colleagues before me mentioned, and it is incredibly important, it is of course working towards the achievement of the SDGs, for which again connectivity is hugely important. We believe that equipping women with mobile technologies and of course the opportunities that bring -- that can be particularly

helpful in achieving many of the SDGs.

We can go to the next slide, please.

This really showcases the impact that our connected Women Initiative has had. As you can see, we have reached over 39 million women so far and the commitment has encompassed 40 operators and the current cycle, which runs for three years has 16. I should also point out that actually the connected women programme is only 10 years old. I think this is a remarkable achievement for -- given the short span of the problem.

Next slide, please.

These are just some examples of the data, that's connected, that our programme produces to support the mobile industry but also the number of other stakeholders in the system including governments, regulatory bodies and of course also the tech industry at large. Again, in the interest of time, I will not go into that but I'm more than happy to Sherry sources and links in the chat option and alternatively feel free to reach out to me and I'm happy to share that.

I did mention, of course, our annual gender gap report, be on the lookout, it will be published around June, around the landmark event, mobile world Congress and some preliminary data was in factory leased yesterday in honor of International Women's Day.

Now this is, of course, one example. I would like to proceed now to my second example which is very applicable to some of the discussions we're having today and something that can easily be implemented across the Western balance cons and eastern country partnerships, especially when we discuss how to empower girls with STEM skills, how do we raise awareness of the importance of STEM education.

Next slide, please.

This is done by the GSMA Tech 4 Girls Initiative. This is an initiative that GSMA started initially in our North American region but it has now become global and not least because of the support of many partners from across a number of sector who are members of the EQUALS global partnership. This is why it is now powered by equals, we recognize the importance of really growing this initiative with all relevant stakeholders. What's tech had girls aim to do? In the first instance, we want to educate, we want to educate by conducting typically one to two-day very hands on workshops on particular topics that aim to spark both interest in STEM and tech concepts in general, and, of course, on the other hand, introduce typically young girls and women ages 10 to 25 to technology.

Why it is important actually, it is to have advanced digital skills.

Now, of course the workshops, they're as I mentioned limited in time span but we do recognize that the initial interaction, the initial introduction, it is critical to spark interest subsequently and so a young women, girl can continue to pursue her interest in the field.

Now, secondly, the problem is unique, it doesn't just end there.

We ensure that Tech 4 Girls alumni, it is actually the next step to enroll in an 8-week eMentorship programme that connects stakeholders from the mobile industry with some of our Tech 4 Girls alumni whereby they're enrolled as I mentioned in an 8-week soft skills programme which actually complements the very introductory STEM skills they had accomplished through the workshops. Lastly, of course, that all feeds into the global talent pipeline. We have all heard -- you know, we have challenges actually with recruitment, not least because it is always not there.

Again, I'm cautious about time, I'll try to quickly wrap up. Now, what are our target groups. I mentioned 2016 and subsequently -- 12016 and currently 162025, currently we offer curriculum, one is mobile app development and the second, introduction to tech to eCommerce, why mobile app? Of course, this is the core of what we do and represent, GSMA, but also I'm sure you wouldn't be surprised to hear that there were in circulation 179 billion mobile applications. So of course it is a very quickly growing field with demand for talent and we want to make sure that women are in position to become mobile app developers and that come was a substantial remuneration which in turn, of course, ensures that women are able to become enablers of their own future.

Secondly, of course, introduction to tech through eCommerce, again, wanting to empower our participants, even they know how to build an online store which is what the workshop teaches them to do. They can, of course, launch their own business completely online and again that's critical in rural areas where normally there may be logistical challenges in doing so.

Of course, the initiative, as you see on the right, it really aims to capitalize on both the hands I don't know STEM training and the eMentorship platform whereby we're really preparing these young women ideally to enter the workforce.

Next slide.

These are just some examples of over the past let's

say six months where we have targeted participants, the Western Balkans, of course, the global Eastern European Union region does not feature on this map, and this is actually a great occasion to brainstorm and collaborate and see how can we address gap and that need that we have heard this morning because again I think introduction of such initiatives, such as Tech 4 Girls moves the needle in the region.

Finally -- and with this I'll conclude -- I really wanted to showcase with you the impact that we have been able to achieve so far.

Next slide, colleagues.

Now again, keeping in mind even though in initiative as I mentioned originate two daughters years ago, it is only the past -- two years ago, it is only the last 6, 8 months where we have achieved a global outreach. The results are remarkable as you see, 94% of our participants had improved their understanding of the STEM and what possible career paths in STEM look like. 88% told us they felt confident about pursuing further tech studies and 70% had increased their knowledge of STEM career opportunities.

Again, I cannot emphasize enough the need for such initiatives especially as part of formal, informal educational curriculums. I myself come from Eastern Europe, I'm Bulgarian, I'm -- for that reason, I'm happy to be speaking today. I can also share that when I was growing up, you know, STEM education, it wasn't emphasized as part of my curriculum. I was want necessarily encouraged to develop skills in that field.

Now luckily that was never let's say necessarily a passion to become a mobile app developer, a software engineer, but nonetheless, obviously now I work in this field, I'm incredibly passionate about digital equality and women rights and I wish when I was growing up, you know, the importance of STEM education was emphasized a little bit more and it wasn't just left, you now, as something that's dominated just by boys and men.

Thank you. I look forward to the discussion and questions later.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you, Tamara.

This is really a lot of excellent work and a lot of impact generation at the regional level and we're looking forward to the engagement and support to be given from the national level to all those initiatives which you referred to.

Now I would welcome another to tell us about the need for women to be more visible in business, how tech can help

achieve this.

So the floor is yours.

>> BABOU OLENGHA-AABY: Thank you for the opportunity to come and to take part in this important conversation.

Before I tell you a little bit about the company, how we're addressing this issue of gender equality diversity, I would like to give you some background about myself and from a personal perspective why it matters to me and I was born in the Congo and grew up in Europe mainly.

My mother was a diplomat, we moved around quite a bit. Throughout my childhood it was very much honed on me the importance of education and how lucky I was to be able -- that my mother was able to afford an education for me and she made a point of putting me in the best schools possible. I went to French school in most of these markets.

What I really realize, what I really appreciate now today, it is that all of the opportunities that I have been able to manifest in my life I would say are a directory response to the education that I received and the opportunities that unfolded from that.

Also coming from a country like DRC, where so many young girls like in most Developing Countries in the world are not afforded safe access or same access to education, it is very important to me in starting a company that not only would empower women, find a way to unlock the women's economic potential as a catalyst for unlocking access to opportunities.

IE access to capital, access to market, access to education, access to upskilling, and that was a premise of why I started the next billion which ironically used to be called something else, we started as a funding platform for mompreneurs, I completely understand the value of supporting mothers and especially seeing how great in the group is when given the opportunity to grow.

What I realize when we started with this, very quickly, there was a step before funding, we were finding it very hard to find women that wanted to show up even though they needed the money, even though they needed the funding. Many preferred to hide at home until their products were 100% perfect. We started to notice that there was a step before actually funding that needed to be addressed when it came to unlocking women's economic potential, in business, entrepreneurship, and which was visibility, which was funding. So we looked at our mission and we rethought that mission. From that experience we decided that as a company what we wanted to focus on, the

key, the driver that we want to focus on, it was visibility, you know, focus on raising the visibility of 1 billion women entrepreneur, producer, manufacturers and employers because we believe that a lot of the things that we have learned through our journey, speaking to journalist, investor, to women themselves, we don't invest because we couldn't find, we don't invite women to speak because we can't find, I don't buy any women owned qualities because I don't know a company owned by a women. It was important for us to power the technology that's the basis of what we do in the next billion, how do we leverage technology and the power of the crowd, how do we engage everyone around this problem and how to invite them to contribute at a nominal level.

We say that we are impact for profit, for impact company, we deliver visibility as a service for women in business globally and we would like to share with you my screen. Hopefully it work, to show you the two products we have and how we're directly impacting gender equality diversity. So global spotted, it is what we call our global discovery search engine. We conceived this, we wanted to -- this was before the wake of COVID, but it became even more apparent the importance of it to us, the visibility for women-owned businesses, it became a higher priority because of COVID and we have been working on this site for the last two years and we just launched a couple weeks ago officially. Premise is that we want to build a place, one global discovery home for women-owned business, a place where anyone who wants to contribute to the grow for women and businesses can do so by searching for products and services that they need and in doing so put-back money into these businesses. You can find businesses, you can search for services and you can also find inspiration. I think as mentioned, the power of role models, the levels of involvement increasing, and that's the power of visibility and we wanted to really much mimic that Google offered but the difference is that we are -- we say we're people powered. We don't rely on algorithm to find companies owned by women, we rely on people.

On the top corner, there is a spotter company button, and this is really at the basis of what we say about letting everybody be able to contribute to the issue, anybody can come in here, in this field, they can actually contribute to raising visibility of women-owned businesses, whether it is a service that you bought yourself, a product you bought yourself or just a women-owned business that inspired you, come, tell us the name of the company, their

website, the city it is on and the female entrepreneur and what inspired you to spot this company.

That's it.

We really wanted to lower the barrier of entry of how people could contribute and participate, we believe that by doing so, lowering the barriers that way, you can actually scale up contributions. You can scale at mass level.

Because we are all about visibility, we also recognize the people that spot companies brought us.

If you don't mind going down the page for a quick overview. Scroll all the way down.

We want it to be very, very visual, we want to move away again from tech space, results-based, our envision is for people to visually see and discover not only the profiles of women behind the companies, but also the companies themselves. We thought about Google has image, we want profiles, so you start to recognize every single face of different women behind every single one of these companies and then you can also discover their stories and go to the linked in and empower people to learn more about these women but also to purchase the products that they offer.

So if you go back up, you tap into profiles so that we can give -- yeah. Click on to profile.

Scroll down to below for profiles. As I said -- yeah. Yeah. As I said, here is where you can actually discover the different women that are spotted on our search engine. If you scroll down again, I want to give everybody a glimpse of how we do it.

If you click on any of these women, you get a glimpse of what the industry is, the location where they're based, what title is, the CEO founder of the company and the companies themselves. When you click on it, you also are able to actually discover more about them.

Please click on any profile that you see. Here you will be able to read with them the impact of how they contribute to the economics through their business, see the level of experience, connect with them, so if you scroll further down, connect with them as well as if they have any press written about them, you can also discover the stories that have been written about them.

We have companies that are on our website that are product-based, consumer-based products all the way to tech companies that are changing the lives of children and a good example, it is no isolation. No isolation is a Norwegian based company, they have an amazing technology, they have developed a robot, a small robot that actually

kids who aren't at school because affected by long-term illness can actually use at home to follow their whole education while away from home. These are the kind of tools, and I think the kind of tools and innovation that can be applied and used in Developing Countries where especially right now in COVID time where so many students and young people have been affected by school closures. I really want to show you the power of this.

If you just go up again, click on -- just type in no isolation. Although this is not the technology that was developed for I would say the west, there is great potential in this technology because it can be used in so many regions of the world and in particular to address the issue of how do we keep children educated in places, young girls educated in places where they can no longer go to school.

If you scroll down the page, you will see no isolation there, you can click on them.

So this is what they do, they started this because the founder, she was ill for a long time, was isolated from her work, her friend, and she had to stay in isolation at home and she conceived this product for herself, but then saw the bigger picture and the bigger ambition and the bigger impact that it was and actually in offering this product to children who in some way or form are isolated because of illness initially but now they're looking it for broader humanitarian uses as well and also for the elderly as well.

So this is one of the ways, just one of the ways that we're using technology, leveraging technology to really adjust the balance through visibility because we believe that if you were able to build a global discovery home where the only time you wanted to buy a product, you're driven by the need, you can actually give back and change the life by women owned business, by doing so, we know the multiplier effects of women, that they reinvest 90% of their income back to family, communities, and this was very important for us to use the power of the crowd and technology in this way to address this issue for women-owned businesses.

Our second product, which we had developed, it was called profile me. If you don't mind going to the profile me website. Profile me is directly created to address -- to address the visibility gap that women have in business as a way to also accelerate and increase diversity in the workforce. As has been mentioned before, women are adversely affected by -- have been adversely affected by COVID in the workplace as well and seeing that women

represent over 50% of the world population, 75% is unpaid workforce and 1.2 billion is active workforce. We felt that instead of focusing on the narrative that women don't have or still can't or won't, we wanted to use the power of something like photography, storytelling and technology to be able to give another portrayal, show another narrative of women as a way to inspire not only those women to show up in their lives, but also to inspire and in doing so, inspire the next generation of young girls to see all that they can be. That's the premise really of profile me and so we use photography, a portrait shoot, in essence, the portrait shoot, it is very vanity-based. If you scroll down the page, I can show a little bit more.

Again, our role is to raise visibility of 1 billion women in business.

Really, it is an invitation for women to show up themselves and to take ownership of their visual identity.

There is an intentionality when you book a shoot, you don't book a shoot just to have pictures and that, you book a shoot because you either want to use it to apply for that job, you either want to use it to tell a story on your website or your marketing, you want to use it to have greater visibility on social media. There is always an intentionality, and by choosing to shoot or book a shoot with us, what you're saying, it is that I'm ready to show up for change in my life, whether it is for that job or not.

That is a subtle power of photography that we wanted to use and wanted to do diversity in a fun, different way. We felt it was a very digestible way to engage hundreds, if not millions, of women to show up for change in their own life and in doing so, what we're very excited about, we which launched yesterday, it is this real, tangible impact. When you show up, shoot, gift a shoot for women and your life, then we take, we are committing to gifting a percentage of that booking fee to send more girls at school so that more girls get to show up at school.

One of the organizations that we are supporting, starting with, it is She For She Pad, what was amazing, the number of young girls adversely impacted by the demonstration of 80 million young girls do not show up at school because of menstruation. Something that we take for granted that we walk in a shop, we buy pads, so many young girls not only die from complications by using alternatives methods of pads, but the dangers associated with having to go back to school, so there are so many and we wanted to support She For She Pads because we felt that they were

aligned with how we saw the impact that we wanted to achieve.

Yes, when somebody books a shoot with us, you're not only helping us to build an image-bank of role models that we can tell the stories of, to show young girls, hey, this is who you can become, and in doing so, what's great about it, it is democratic. We don't choose who gets to book the shoots, we have everybody from marketing assistance, companies, Ph.D. doctors, we -- every time we shoot, we write the stories of these women and we share them in a campaign that we either -- that we title distance, what a tech finder looks like, what another looks like, we believe that that -- I think we're getting more awakened to the power ever representation, the power of being.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: It is really hard to interrupt you.

What you're showing, this is real stories from the grassroots and this is something that we would like to see more massively happening around the world, but unfortunately our time is running.

With this, I would like to thank you very much for your contribution and to this panel and we'll come back with some questions and now let me turn to Bianca to share with us how can we create a sustainable and diverse and inclusive workspace for Women and Girls.

The floor is yours.

>> PRIYANKA BANERJEE: Thank you for the introduction. Such an amazing session today. I have been super inspired by all of the stories (poor audio quality).

A bit about myself. I'm Priyanka Banerjee, I'm originally from India and I have done my electronics and communication engineering from India, that's how I entered into the ICT field that led me to Finland, lucky me. (Poor audio quality).

I saw there was an understanding of how we can provide an ecosystem to women and people of diverse backgrounds to drive in the companies. A lot of times people really forget about the intersectionality that comes into when we're talking about equality or gender equality because for me, when I started working here, of course I was from a dinner culture, from a different country, a women of color, I don't speak the native language and from a different religion and it was all coming together into one whole experience.

As you know, people say that for one person, if they can actually make a lot of difference, I wanted to really test that if it is possible and if it can be done. I

started my own organization and what we are doing, we definitely provide a lot of awareness, education but one of the main things that I realized, what we're using very less to building more equal companies is the data. We're not using technology and the data in science from the organizations enough to help them create a more sustainable place.

What's that mean? It means that when people or companies are starting initiatives to build gender equality or to create inclusion a lot of times they put people in a box. (Poor audio quality).

They put resources in developing good maternal leave initiatives and the issue didn't change. Why it didn't change, they did not really look into the data or understand why the women were actually leaving. When they looked into it, the reason was, it was that these women, they are very ambitious and they wanted more challenging jobs and the organization was not able to provide them with the challenging jobs and ambitious levels they were looking for.

This is one of the examples, we have also seen the examples based on intersectionality, for example, in the organizations we found that transwomen, they have -- they have very low belongingness level in some companies, they feel that they don't have enough voice, they don't have enough decision making power. We kind of help the organizations to see what is their strengths and what are the exact pinpoint places where they need to put their resources and create customized initiatives. Is not putting one initiative for everyone, but identifying what initiatives are actually required for people and for people from different sections and from different parts and industries.

Even though, like I saw the recent survey we is it, with one organization, we found out that there were women in the lower sections, the job roles in the organizations and sometimes people say, okay, we have a lot of diversity and females in the company but then when you start to look at the -- there is very less women in the top or very less women in the tech fields. We have seen that there are a lot of women in business, in marketing, in design, but not really engineering, product development and these kind of services. This is what we also try to do, the initiatives that can improve the number of women and people from different backgrounds into the product development and development and also in the technological field so that we can have products that are inclusive. Building inclusive

products and using data in science is one of the keys that we have seen that's been working in inclusive places.

I would also like to say that in Finland, we have a lot of gender balance or it is seen as one of the forerunners in gender balance but the industries here, they're still segregated which means that for example 84% -- there is 84% women in let's say health and welfare sector, while in ICT, I think the statistics Finland in 2019, there were only 13% women which is a huge gap in the segregation of the women.

Also we have seen, I'm a start-up founder pie self, there is so less female founders and as in the State of tech in 2020 there has been 90% of the whole investment, it went to all male founding teams. This data, it really shows that there is a skew and Finland is under the people raising technology and innovation and they have four priorities and one of the priorities, it is improving the participation of Women and Girls in the STEM fields and also in leadership in the STEM fields, also reducing the gap of digitalization and digital skills among women and also having two other priorities, for example, building gender sensitive products, which promotes non-discrimination and also this has been reducing gender-based violence on the digital platforms. These are great initiatives. It provides the private companies or the companies that are impacted and driven towards a direction where we can form partnerships. That's another thing that I think has helped us is collaboration with public services and also with different non-profit organizations, for example, I'm on the Board of International working women of Finland and we have around 5300 -- over 5300 members and we're working with all of those women to help them in their professional journey and reducing these gaps, providing them with a safe space and not recreating the wheels.

We're partnering with European digital society, for example, to create ethical digital ecosystems and this kind of collaboration has helped us to not recreate the wheel. This platform, it is so good. Now you can see what people are doing and we can just learn from each other rain not repeat what's been done.

Just to -- I see that we're running out of time.

To summarize, I think sustainable transformation requires structural changes. We cannot just create an initiative that we don't know why we're building.

My personal vision is to create inclusive workplaces that is -- that will attract women and people from

different backgrounds themselves it is a pull effect, not a push effect and provide them with a culture of work where they can try to be themselves and we need to change the narrative, you have the masculine topic, definitely active collaborations and that's why I'm really happy to be here and last but not the least, using the digital innovations like data in science, data analytic, machine learning, to bring the future that we are envisioning faster and we can talk a little bit more about how and what we're doing in the discussion so over to you.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you very much for this intervention and sharing your perspective.

Access one of the key components in delivering transformative change in every girl's life. I would like to invite Amelia, our last speaker of this round to give her perspective.

The floor is yours.

I ask you to put your questions in the chat box. We'll aim to wrap up our event at 12:15, 12:20.

>> EMILIJA STOJMENO: I'm the last one, I have the least time of all!

I'm an assistant professor from the faculty of engineering, and I'm very glad that the other participants had shared personal stories. This is very important and I will share my personal story with you as well.

When I started studying electronic engineering, I was the only girl, only women between 150 students. I'm now a professor and this year, it was the first time in my life when in the first year I had more female than male students. I was very happy about that, it means that there is some progress going on.

Maybe shortly, I would like to say the current status when it comes to gender equality in Slovenia. In Slovenia, female, ICT specialist, there are around 19% of all experts in the country. However, if we see the number of STEM graduates it is very different because 15 people for 1,000 individuals finished their studies in STEM and 26 male for 1,000, you can see that not even half less women than men finished STEM studies and the number of specialist, it is much, much lower. Another thing, another problem in the ICT industry in the country, it is unjust pay gaps, the and it was also mentioned and there is very low share of women in management position, even in the position, when they are, usually they're leading out how man resources sector. So they're not CTOs, no CEO, and so on. Another thing, it is in the country there are so many times where there are no women present. Today, we only -- sorry, you were not

the only male today, that's completely different situation, but if we have an expert talk or panel, whatsoever, it is happening over and over again that there are no women or there is usually one woman that is present here. The situation, it is quite different than today's panel.

Go to the next slide.

I will shortly go through why digital technologies and ICTs, it why it is so important for women. First, it is access to quality education and training.

Even if they don't have good education in their own region, in their own environment because of the internet, the access to the internet, you can follow very good and also many times free trainings or cofunded trainings, trainings for very low price at very good platforms. Here you can see just some of them.

This is a great opportunity for women who otherwise did not have good access to quality education and training.

The next one.

I think this is again very, very important access to working income. In the picture on the left, it is me with my son. This was happening over and over again. So when my son was younger even though in Slovenia we have a very generous parental leave, however in ICT, in tech, if you want to be there, then you must be there. Even when your child is small, ill, so on, so on, you have to work, and you have to keep ongoing. Because even before COVID, because I was able to work I still was able to have access to work and to income and for me, it was a major -- how to share, how do I say this? It was very important because I was able to stay at the University, I was able to keep applying for new projects, I was able to work on the projects and also I was able to apply for higher positions.

So the other two picture, they're pictures from one of our projects that we're working on, smart villages, about how digital transformation can help rural areas and here in the first picture you can see ladies, that they're working with wool, they're developing wool products and because of the ICT they were able to market and sell their products all around.

Again, access to income and the picture down, it is from COVID right now. It is about a wine hub that couldn't sell their wine or organize wine tasting, but due to COVID, because everything was stopped, because of the lockdown, so what we did, we produced new digital technologies and they started -- a new service, a new product, which is virtual wine tasting and these women, they found a way to still be part of the work and to earn income during COVID times.

Next slide.

An important thing for ICT and women, it is access to health and social care. Because I usually work with rural areas A lot with the rural areas, and we can see in answer times for them, it is not so easy to have access to good health and social care where they live.

Because of the eServices of eHealth, eCare, so on, so on, using sensors, now it is much, much easier to get this access to healthcare. Even during COVID we had a very good project with the hospital wherein instead of going to the hospital -- where instead of going to the hospital, they gave the equipment to home so people were able to do the measurements and to take care of their health at home.

If we can go to the next slide. Another thing, it is access to public services. We talked about work life balance today. For example, if you need to go to the municipality, I don't know what other public service, many times you need take a day off, I don't know, to get from the job earlier, but now when we have the 'public services available 24/7 you don't need to drive any anywhere, you don't have to put special time to do that. It is also very important, and this is especially for women.

I work at the University but I live 120 kilometers away. Before anything that I had to do, I had to stay, which means I was not able to work because before COVID the fact that there was not so much fond of working from home and having eServices, and in Slovenia, we have really good eGovernment, very useful for me and for many of my colleagues.

With the last slide, I will just put -- I have one more.

I think -- yeah. Guck to the next slide.

This is another very important issue. ICT technology gives women a voice. You remember what was happening in Poland? I don't know what was in the other countries, but in Slovenia in support of the women of Poland we all had on Facebook this sign, so it means that using digital technology, it really gives you a voice. It is not you, but then through media, social media, you can share what's happening and there is a visibility and then you can find support from not only your region, your country, but all around the world.

I think this is very, very important for women and this is why we're also important to be digitally literate.

Now the next -- and the last slide, it is the concrete steps.

The first and foremost condition create step, access

to high-speed broadband everywhere and for everyone in time. In Europe, there is still so many areas that are not covered with high-speed broadband and as I mentioned, I'm working with rural areas so especially in the rural areas, this is the problem. I think we all need to have equal access to broadband. Without equal access to broadband we don't have equal opportunities. Raising awareness about ICT again everywhere and any time, what ICT is, many times I keep receiving questions that what if it overtakes our job, ICT is not about just automation, about robotization, it is much, much more. Because of ICT, some jobs will disappear but some jobs will again be created. Creation, delivery of digital public services, so at all levels, governmental level, municipal level, regional level, so on.

The most important thing, it is skills. We have to work on skills if we wouldn't reduce the digital gap because very important to provide programmes and projects where people can get these skills. It was mentioned earlier as well. Training, I think it was in Bosnia, that parents need to receive trainings for ICT, I completely agree, and I believe that teachers in schools must receive ICT skills because otherwise they would not know how to help the children and the girls, and then funding, ICT trainings, giving other incentives and this is where industry can help a lot as well, funding projects, programmes, ICT programmes in schools and not knowledge high schools, but in elementary schools and even earlier, setting out the whole ecosystem of support.

The last thing I would like here to say, it is what concretely we should do. We should stop talking and start doing. At the beginning there was a presentation from Slovenia on how good is everything in Slovenia, and this is not true. This is -- some is data, statistical numbers, but then comes the reality. We for example just last week, there was an organization of a Conference of the future of Europe by the government so the same government that's preparing all of these action plans, but there was not a single woman present at the Conference. Then it was very important to give role models and I really liked the presentation where we saw visibility of women female entrepreneurs and here it is again, the same, we need to see who engineers are. Many times when I come to event, I'm treated as a secretary or even though I'm leading my group at the University of Electrical Engineering, so people ask me this is how electrical engineers look like. We need to give role models, show that what electrical engineers or ICT specialists look like, what they do, so

why is it important to have women in electrical engineering or in artificial intelligence or so on, so forth, and then let them speak for themselves. So not that some other people would present what specialists do, the challenges they face, so on, so forth, they know what they're faced with, the challenges.

I believe that we now need to move from words on paper and action plans, concretely to action and realization with very clear deadlines and responsibilities.

Here I would stop.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you very much for this presentation. It was really great to hear facts and to see that it should be a call for action in fact which we should now focus on. We're arriving to a time not allowing us to take a round of questions and answers.

We hope this is not the last time when we're meeting with all of the distinguished speakers and the we'll have the opportunity to see each other on the nearest occasion, however before we're concluding, I would like to ask each of the speakers to have a 30-second speech for action. What would you like to see happening in the coming three months.

>> MARIAM LASHKHI: I was type, I missed the answer.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: We're asking you for a 30-second speech for action, what you would like to see happening in the coming three months from your perspective.

>> MARIAM LASHKHI: My pitch is to empower the females so not to be afraid from your side because when you are a mom, when you are at home, like you can still work and be a mom-preneur. I myself, with an ICT background, I'm an active mom and politician, there is no border for females to go further and we from our nature are bringing the new life to the world. Be kind of brave and we will bring new life to the new world with -- especially ICT.

Empowering females and giving to the environment for every female.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you.

>> TAMARA DANCHEVA: It was mentioned during this event, I would like to see commitments translated into action. I think we have a great opportunity with the generation equality process and then again the question remains how we translate the numerous commitments into action.

From an industry perspective, of course, how do we ensure that we drive change internally and externally. I'm very sorry we didn't have time to share what we're doing internally, but we must not forget that when women reach

these leadership positions they need to stay there. That's of course a responsibility for them, as every organization, looking into their culture, looking into their incentives and so on, so on.

Yeah. Thank you.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you very much.

>> BABOU OLENGHA-AABY: In line with others, less talking, more action. From the perspective as well, it is about empowering women to take ownership of that change. I think a lot of times when we talk about women, young girls, it is always how other people can help them, but I think it is important that women realize that in showing up in their live, whether it is their job, whatever they're starting up in business, if you don't do, take the first step, nothing changes.

From that perspective, for us, empowering women to show up, but think about mentorship. Everybody has a journey and a story which can help somebody else. You don't have to be a CEO of a company to do that. You do not have to be a board member to do that. Giving back what you already have I think is a very powerful tool. It is also a tool that can inspire women and build confidence in women as well.

That's what I would like to see women do more of, to show up in their live, mentor other women, eventually in that way also show the next generation all that they can be.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you very much.

>> PRIYANKA BANERJEE: Thank you. What I would like to ask especially workplaces to create more long-term, sustainable solutions and strategies in place with proper action items and measurements. Also thinking about intersectionality, when developing initiatives, so that we don't leave anybody behind. Also as an individual, I would like to have all of you present here to question yourselves, are you yourselves putting or having, promoting gender stereotype in science, in technology yourself, to your kids, what can we do to improve or double up our own behaviors in empowering and promoting women? Thank you.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you.

>> EMILIJA STOGMENOVADUH: An action plan that's concrete on when everybody on this planet has access to high speed broadband, that's very easy to be done.

The other one again A good action plan to raise digital skills for children, parents, teachers, and then last but not least it would be nice to have a platform, a network of female specialists where media can find the

next -- for -- where you can find the mentor, where you see what other women are doing, when teachers can show, see, this is what she's doing, these are the projects she's working on and this is the impact she's doing. These are the things.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you very much.

Let me thank you very much for contributing to this. I think that we have clear call for the brave action with very much actionable items to be addressed in the near future and ensuring self-sustainability and sustainability and the impact at the national level.

Thank you very much for all of the proposal and all of your calls, great presentations which we really enjoyed during this event.

Ladies and gentlemen, this brings us to the end of the event. Let me thank on behalf of all organizers of the event to be with us. Also for being with us and sharing this important moment of launching the study which should serve us to focus on the actions which are evidence-based. Not theoretical but really closing some gaps existing in the region.

I'm delighted to be closing that vibrant discussion today. Let me start by saying how lucky I am to run a team with 70% of women being on my team, women, and also being guided by the leadership of our Director Doreen Bogdon-Martin who is the symbol of the change in terms of the gender equality. ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau is dedicating efforts to achieve gender equality internally but also promoting gender equality across the world through successful initiatives such as girls in ICTs, EQUALS, and the network of women and additional network of women has just been launched today in Asia-Pacific when we were deliberating on this report.

Distinguished speakers, the Director of the U.N. U.N. Women, others from Slovenia, distinguished colleagues, I would like to thank you very much once again for the precious words which I know is inspiring for participants through this event this morning, the launch of the report, it is opening the new chapter for us to act with the countries and also act with the engagement of the youth and we are very grateful and to our members of the European Youth Group which joined today and to contribute with some observations, but also with some ideas to advance the gender equality and the level of the Generation Connect Initiative.

Finally, this roundtable, it is also closing at the ITU regional forum for Europe on meaningful connectivity

where gender is a very important component because within the framework of the need for connectivity, we're not only taking a look at the infrastructure but how the infrastructure is used and for what purposes. This is the reason why this session was so important to us and therefore let me therefore thank the Ministry of Public administration of Republic of Slovenia for supporting the organization of this two-day event as well as the session.

Before I close, just let me remind you, this meeting was held within the framework of the United Nations Regional Forum on Sustainable Development which is a joint initiative and event of the all U.N. system working in Europe and Central Asia with a final week on the 17 and 18 of March, but we have a special session on digital transformation happening on the fifth of March. Don't miss this opportunity. Also we draw your attention to the other opportunities coming up, including the forum on digital skills and accessibility still in March.

With this, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to inform you that all information on our presentation will be posted on the website of this event. We encourage you to not only go look at the materials and also to join our initiative and in case you have the concrete proposal and to bring to the table and to join other forces to work on them at the national, regional level or global level and please contact us and wishing you all a good continuation and see you in the next event.

Thank you very much one more time on behalf of all organizers of the event and we see you very soon on the next occasion.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

\*\*\*

This text, document, or file is based on live transcription. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), captioning, and/or live transcription are provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. This text, document, or file is not to be distributed or used in any way that may violate copyright law.

\*\*\*