Gender in Digital Coalition Statement on the Revision 2 of the WSIS+20 Outcome Document

The Gender in Digital Coalition presents its comments on Revision 2 of the WSIS+20 Outcome Document. Throughout the entire review process, our coalition has consistently highlighted a set of structural concerns that remain insufficiently addressed in the WSIS architecture. As we engage in this stage of negotiations, we underscore that the gender-related elements currently reflected in Revision 2 are essential and must not be removed or weakened. Ensuring that gender equality remains a core, non-negotiable pillar of the WSIS framework is imperative for the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Outcome Document.

We recognize the progress reflected in this updated draft, particularly the preservation of key references to gender equality and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. However, important gaps remain. To ensure an inclusive, rights-based, and gender-responsive digital future, gender must be systematically integrated across all WSIS structures, especially the Action Lines; and the text must avoid conflating distinct harms that require differentiated policy and regulatory responses.

Gender mainstreaming across WSIS Action Lines

We welcome the retention of paragraph 11 and its acknowledgment that meaningful and affordable access remains fundamental to the WSIS vision. We also welcome paragraph 112, which calls on Action Lines to address gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. For more than two decades, gender has been treated as an implicit cross-cutting concern rather than an explicit requirement. This has resulted in fragmented implementation, limited accountability, and Action Lines that operate without consistent gender-responsive guidance. Therefore, we underscore the need to sustain the text from paragraphs 11 and 112.

The integration of gender across *all* Action Lines and their implementation should not be aspirational, but operational. Each Action Line achieves its objectives more effectively when gender equality is treated as core rather than peripheral:

C1 (Governance): National digital strategies that fail to mandate gender-responsive design and women and LGBTIQIA+'s participation in policy formation reproduce exclusionary systems, undermining multistakeholder governance principles.
C2 (Infrastructure): Infrastructure deployment prioritizing profit-centered models systematically bypasses rural areas where women and LGBTQIA+ people are concentrated, while ignoring safety and mobility constraints that prevent their access to connectivity facilities.
C3 (Access to Information): Even where technically connected, women and LGBTQIA+'s access remains constrained by affordability barriers, social surveillance, and content failing to address health, legal, and economic information critical to their autonomy.
C4 (Capacity Building): Digital literacy initiatives that reach women and LGBTQIA+ people but provide no pathways to advanced skills perpetuate occupational segregation, leaving technical fields male-dominated and innovation ecosystems gender-blind.

C5 (Confidence and Security): Platforms governance models inadequately addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence make digital spaces increasingly hostile to women's participation, directly contradicting this Action Line's core purpose.

C6 (Enabling Environment): Regulatory frameworks omitting gender impact assessments and economic barriers disproportionately affecting women entrepreneurs ensure the "enabling" environment remains disabling for half the population.

C7 (ICT Applications): Digital applications in health, agriculture, finance, and governance that overlook women and LGBTQIA+ people's specific contexts encode and amplify existing biases through algorithmic systems, undermining service delivery effectiveness.

C10 (Ethical Dimensions): Ethical frameworks for emerging technologies that omit feminist perspectives ensure AI and algorithmic systems perpetuate rather than resolve discrimination, contradicting WSIS.

Effective implementation and measurement

Robust implementation depends on the systematic production of gender-responsive evidence. The Outcome Document should therefore explicitly **recognize the need to support and invest in the production of gender-disaggregated data, statistics, studies, and research** capable of capturing the intersectional dimensions of gender across all WSIS Action Lines. It should also **establish gender-specific indicators, targets, and reporting obligations** to ensure that Action Line reviews consistently measure gendered outcomes and generate meaningful accountability.

In addition, the Outcome Document must mandate the **conduction of gender impact assessments** in the development and implementation of ICT policies, AI governance processes, and emerging technology frameworks, so that potential harms and inequalities are identified and addressed before they materialize. Also, these commitments will only be actionable if they are backed by adequate resources. Therefore, the Outcome Document should **establish dedicated funding streams for gender-responsive research, capacity-building, and policy implementation**.

Ensuring access to data for gender equality

In line with established international guidance on access to information and data justice, the Outcome Document should also recognize that equitable **access to data**, particularly those held by large private actors, is essential for enabling gender-responsive policymaking.

The Outcome Document should therefore affirm that stakeholders have obligations to **enable safe, rights-respecting access to datasets, statistics, and research**, including those relevant to gendered digital harms. It should also **recognize that transparency and access to data are essential for accountability, evidence-based regulation, and the design of gender-responsive digital policy.**

Recognizing and addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)

We welcome the reintroduction of explicit references to sexual and gender-based violence in paragraph 54 in Rev 2. Maintaining distinct, substantive language on technology-facilitated

gender-based violence (TFGBV) is essential to achieving WSIS's core vision, not peripheral to it.

TFGBV is not simply harmful content requiring moderation - it is a **systematic barrier that drives women, girls and LGBTQIA+ people from digital spaces, directly impeding the universal access and meaningful participation that WSIS Action Lines were designed to advance**. Research demonstrates that TFGBV undermines progress across multiple WSIS Action Lines: it restricts women's access to information (C3), limits capacity building (C4), constrains economic participation (C7), and fundamentally compromises confidence and security in ICT use (C5).

Conflating TFGBV with other online harms risks obscuring its structural nature and the comprehensive responses it requires. While hate speech, discrimination, misinformation, disinformation, cyberbullying, and child sexual exploitation and abuse each demand attention, TFGBV reflects systemic gender inequality requiring differentiated approaches grounded in prevention, protection, accountability, and remedy - aligned with the Beijing Platform for Action, CSW-67 Agreed Conclusions, and the Global Digital Compact.

Without addressing the violence that systematically excludes more than half of the global population from digital participation, WSIS cannot achieve its stated goals. Maintaining strong TFGBV language is therefore a prerequisite for the Information Society's success, supported by two decades of evidence and international consensus.

In this sense, to avoid conflation and safeguard human rights, paragraph 54tre should clarify that the harms listed in it **require differentiated, context-specific, and rights-respecting approaches**, in accordance with affected communities and applicable human rights standards. This is important as the current writing may lead to a monolithic understanding of different internet-related issues, and therefore to regulatory overreach that could undermine freedom of expression, privacy, due process, or civic participation.

In parallel, the Outcome Document should **recognize TFGBV as a manifestation of structural gender inequality requiring comprehensive and diverse policies grounded in prevention, protection, sanction, and reparation**. TFGBV must be addressed not only through legal or punitive approaches but through holistic, systemic strategies aimed at gender equality and structural change.

Women's representation in digital governance, AI research, and capacity building

Finally, we note with concern that Revision 2 does not address the urgent need to improve women's representation across digital governance ecosystems. This omission is evidenced, for instance, in paragraphs 85 and 86, which establish new UN-led programmes on AI research and capacity-building fellowships but include no gender commitments. **Gender equality must be embedded as a core principle of all digital, artificial intelligence and new emerging technology governance. This requires promoting participatory approaches in technology design, ensuring gender-disaggregated and inclusive data practices, and addressing data gaps and biases. Algorithmic impact assessments conducted throughout the AI lifecycle are key tools to evaluate potential gender and intersectional harms.**

Given the well-documented underrepresentation of women (especially from the Global South) in STEM fields, AI research, and digital policy spaces, we strongly recommend embedding **gender parity targets** in fellowship and research programme selection processes, ensuring prioritization of women, girls, and gender-diverse experts from the Global South. Without explicit commitments, these new initiatives risk replicating existing inequalities and excluding the very groups that digital transformation has historically marginalized.

We call on Member States, in this critical moment, to actively defend, strengthen and fully implement the gender-related provisions in the WSIS+20 Outcome Document. In line with their international human rights law obligations and commitments, we urge them to translate their commitments into concrete, accountable and adequate resourced actions for the promotion of gender equality and human rights.