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PRESS RELEASE

International community at the WSIS has a unique opportunity to create an equitable Information Society for all women and men

If the World Summit on the Information Society does not acknowledge existing gender divides in its Plan of Action, a truly equitable Information Society will not occur.

Gender activists, women and men, from different regions of the world are in Geneva at this UN Summit to urge the International Community to ensure that women enjoy the huge potential for social and economic empowerment offered by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and participate effectively in all aspects of the Information Society. Achievement of this goal will help promote gender equality and further eradication of poverty, promotion of peace and security and the enjoyment of human rights.

Over 70 international scholars, government ministers, UN agency heads, media professionals and policy makers have chosen to speak through the WSIS Gender Caucus Critical Debates and Dialogues during the next three days to recommend that the International Community takes urgent action to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are integrated into the WSIS process, outcomes and follow-up. Unless these actions are taken, there is a grave risk that the Summit will not have succeeded in its aim of creating a vision of the information society that contributes to human development.

WSIS Gender Caucus recommendations for the Plan of Action include: gender equal participation in decision making; increase access to new and traditional communications technologies (such as community media) that reflect the needs of women in developing countries and local needs in general; design ICTs to serve people; strengthen women and girls' capacity for ICT design, use and application; include gender in all research and evaluation of Information Society development.

The WSIS Gender Caucus is a multi-stakeholder group of women and men from national governments, civil society non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the United Nations system. It aims to promote inclusion, diversity and gender equality in the "information society".

Dr Gillian Marcelle, founding convenor of the the WSIS Gender Caucus, says: "Even if good information infrastructure and service delivery are in place, without explicit gender analysis and incorporation of the results into policy, programs and projects, the benefits of ICT may bypass women".

Dr. Gillian Marcelle, will be available to be interviewed by media representatives. Please forward requests to: Oliva Acosta, Gender Caucus Media Liaison, +41 76 3039730, Email: info@genderwsis.org

For further information please contact Shafika Isaacs, WSIS Gender Caucus Steering Committee, Mobile: +41 76 5248230, Email: sisaacs@genderwsis.org