

## **Gender Perspectives Are Central to an Information Society that Promotes Human Development**

**Statement Presented by the WSIS-Gender Caucus during  
PrepCom 1  
July 1-5<sup>th</sup> Geneva**

President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, and colleagues

The WSIS Gender Caucus, which was formed during the regional preparatory conference, Bamako 2002, meeting during the PrepCom 1 affirmed that integrating gender equality issues is a critical means as well as a goal in creating a World Information Society that supports and promotes human development and improvement in quality of life.

The WSIS Gender Caucus is a multi-stakeholder group consisting of representatives of parliaments, national governments, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the United Nations system. The WSIS- Gender Caucus affirms its support for the WSIS and commits to work towards the expected outputs of the WSIS by sharing information and ideas on strategies for including gender equality goals and ensuring women's participation in the WSIS process and its outcomes, including follow-up programmes.

Integral to our understanding of gender equality is the realisation that unequal power relations in our societies can contribute to differential access, participation and treatment for men and women in the Information Society.

The WSIS-Gender Caucus identified five priority issues, which should be integrated into the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society and its outcomes, these are:

- **Capacity building and training** to support wide participation by women and gender ICT specialists in policy and decision making and monitoring mechanisms at all levels in the telecommunications and ICT sector; and to support women's greater access and control over resources necessary for their empowerment.
- Facilitating women's active participation in the telecommunications and ICT sector through programmes that encourage and support **entrepreneurship and women's employment, and women's access to international markets.**
- **Reform of decision-making** processes in the telecommunications and ICT sector to ensure good governance, greater accountability to all stakeholders and to improve the participation and representation of women and gender equality advocates in all levels of policy making including participation across generations;
- **Ensuring that ICTs contribute to the goals of peace, equality and development** by including plans to develop and encourage innovative ICT applications in reducing poverty, HIV/AIDS elimination, conflict resolution and peace building, supporting women's reproductive and productive roles, education and literacy programmes and in reducing violence against women; and,

- Support for the recognition of a **Universal Right to Communicate** in the international human rights framework and participation of the women's human rights community as a key partner in the development of these rights and activities.

Giving attention to these priority issues will contribute to the elaboration of the six themes identified by the WSIS organizers and ensure that the deliberations make a difference in the quality of life of all women and men, in particular marginalized women.

The WSIS-Gender Caucus is committed to work with all stakeholders in the preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society and in the implementation of the action plans that result from the Summit in Geneva and Tunis. Following on from the recommendations made to WSIS organizers after the Bamako 2002 regional preparatory meeting, we urge the WSIS Secretariat and other stakeholders to:

- Include gender equality goals within telecommunications and ICT policy analysis, agenda, discussions, activities and in all preparations for the WSIS and its outcomes including follow-up programmes;
- Mainstream gender perspectives in all plans and preparations for the WSIS including the high-level planning mechanisms
- Ensure the participation of national machineries for women, women NGOs and the UN system gender focal points in all preparations for WSIS and its follow-up programmes.
- Include capacity-building for women's participation in all the training programmes planned for WSIS related activities
- Encourage member states to include at least 30% women including gender and ICT experts in their delegations, while at the same time ensuring representation of NGOs in these delegations

We look forward to working closely with all other stakeholders on this important work and offer enthusiastic support and considerable expertise to achieving the objectives of WSIS.

*Contact the WSIS-Gender Caucus at [secretariat-wsisgendercaucus@wougn.net](mailto:secretariat-wsisgendercaucus@wougn.net). Join the Caucus and contribute to this work. Information and membership and programme of action can be found on [http:// www.wougn.net.org/WSIS/wsisgc.html](http://www.wougn.net.org/WSIS/wsisgc.html)*

Thank you

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