

**Gender Caucus Statement  
For Inclusion in Bamako2002 Declaration  
The African Regional Preparatory Meeting For the World Summit on the  
Information Society  
May 25-30 2002**

**We the members of the Gender Caucus meeting in Bamako, Mali during the African Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) express and confirm support for the WSIS.**

**We further bring to the urgent attention of the African and international community engaged in the preparation for the WSIS the need to act now to reduce the widening gender digital divide within the digital divide faced by Africa.**

*Considering* the critical role that women play in all societies and their potential contribution to developing an Information Society, we hereby **urge**:

**1. The UN system and agencies, including the ITU, UNIFEM, UNDP, ECA, UNESCO**

- To develop training and capacity development programmes that can raise awareness of the gendered nature of the Information Society and identify strategies for ensuring fair and equitable participation by African men and women;
- To apply gender analysis frameworks in the development of national, regional and global policies and strategies;
- To develop gender-disaggregated data on women's participation in the Information Society and to carry out research to identify impacts of exclusion and opportunities for increased participation;
- To strengthen co-operation among UN agencies working on gender and ICT issues including support for the working relationships established between UNDP, UNIFEM and the ITU; and
- To continue to work towards ratifying treaties and protocols that recognise women's human rights including the right to communication and include provisions for supporting implementation of these in all of the action plans including those arising out of the WSIS process.

**2. African regional and sub-regional organisations including the UN-ECA, ADB, ATU and OAU/AU**

- To ensure participation of the gender advocacy constituencies in Africa in the conceptualisation, development and implementation of ICT policies, regulatory framework and plans at national, sub-regional, regional and global levels;
- To work with the regional economic communities (RECs) to ensure that the gender dimension is considered and integrated into all policy, regulatory, work programmes and strategies that deal with ICT and development and the ICT industry;
- To ensure that the development and implementation of the NEPAD initiative acknowledges and addresses the gender digital divide and other gender imbalances in Africa; and

- To ensure greater efficiency and synergy among African institutions and their partners by increasing effective co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration in all the activities relating to ICT and development.

### **3. National governments and public –sector bodies particularly including policy making and national regulatory authorities involved in ICT sector and in sustainable development**

- To make full commitment to support democratisation of policy processes within the ICT sector, including use of ICT tools to support this process, and to formulate and implement ICT policy using principles of openness and with full, legitimate participation of all stakeholders including civil society;
- To implement ICT policies through transparent processes with due consideration of the need for accountability;
- To ensure that women’s fair participation in all levels of the ICT industry is assured and increased, through use of regulatory rules and provisions that influence shareholder structures and composition of governance mechanisms, especially as market structures change and become increasingly privatised;
- To increase access to ICT facilities through making arrangements that support achievement of universal access targets and defining specific targets for women’s access to ICT;
- To develop measurable indicators that can contribute to the assessment of ICT policies to women’s empowerment;
- To promote cultural diversity in the implementation of national ICT strategies including through active use of local languages and provision of information on strategies in various media including community radio and non-electronic media;
- To ensure that there is gender equity in education, specifically by providing opportunities to increase girls’ literacy, and by providing access to fair and equitable participation in science and technology education and training at all levels;
- To support use of ICT for women’s empowerment including through application of ICTs in health, education, trade, employment and other women’s development arenas;
- To implement the CEDAW and all other conventions that recognise women’s human rights and right to communication and economic rights and to implement ICT policies and programmes that take account of these commitments; and
- To recognise, ratify, promote and implement the African charter on broadcasting.

### **4. African private sector and African entrepreneurs in the diaspora**

- To support and encourage fair and equitable employment practices including gender equality in remuneration and access to promotion and increased responsibility;
- To take account of corporate social responsibility in carrying out their operations and business development activities;
- To provide increased access to financing for deployment of ICT projects, including through active partnerships with UNIFEM, and women’s organisations particularly in rural areas;

- To participate in mentoring, information exchange and other programmes to support development of private sector initiatives in the African Information Society; and
- To provide infrastructure, services and applications that meet women's needs particularly in rural areas.

### **5. African civil society**

- To ensure that gender equity is a cross-cutting principle and to commit themselves to take a gendered approach in all activities, including planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and in the structure of civil society organisations themselves;
- To commit to active continuous participation in global, sub-regional and national policy processes in the ICT sector;
- To investigate mechanisms for improving the effectiveness of civil society participation in policy conceptualisation and implementation, including capacity building and formation of co-ordinating and information sharing mechanisms;
- To commit to formation of horizontal coalitions on issues relating to the Information Society that permits sharing of ideas and development of joint strategies across various groupings; and
- To use ICTs as an additional strategic tool for action, recognising that these facilities and applications have advantages for facilitating wide communication processes.

### **6. African research and academic community**

- To contribute to the development of a common vision and shared understanding of a Global Information Society that contributes to achieving the goals of sustainable human development in Africa and globally;
- To apply interdisciplinary approaches to examining the emerging Information and Communication Society and culture and its influence on development of Africa;
- To allocate adequate resources to research and teaching on gender dimensions of Information Society issues;
- To increase the use of gender analysis in producing gender disaggregated data and research findings on the impacts of ICTs on men and women ;
- To encourage and support increased participation of women academics in ICT research and analysis through proactive approaches to support women's involvement and mobility in these fields;
- To integrate information literacy and ICT awareness into curricula at all levels of formal and informal training and education programmes; and
- To share and widely disseminate results of academic research.

### **7. Public, private and community media**

- To take account that the convergence of technologies – in radio, internet, email, video and telephone fax etc, has the potential to facilitate communication and access to information, and to take the necessary steps work with a wide range of media and to adopt a multi-media approach ;
- To promote the role that the media can play in transforming society, encouraging debate and to inform. In particular, noting the potential to

address unequal gender power relationships in society, and within the media itself ;

- To promote and support the particularly pivotal role of community media in the democratisation of communication and gender justice ;
- To carry out the specific responsibility to provide equal access to media regardless of gender and other points of exclusion. This includes accountability to its constituencies with regard to its progress in addressing gender inequality ;
- To promote national languages and local content to ensure the widespread participation and inclusion of women; and
- To ensure that local knowledge, including local gender knowledge is given importance in media content, and steps are taken to establish standards of reporting which include gender dimensions.

#### **8. African women movements and organisations**

- To commit to mainstream ICT advocacy issues within their women's human rights programmes, projects and activities;
- To participate in ICT policy processes at all levels including sharing information, reflect women's concerns and integrating gender analysis expertise into policy formulation and research; and
- To use ICTs as a tool in information dissemination and campaigning, including around national, sub-regional, global policy processes.

#### **9. International partners and investors**

- To recognise that providing increased access to ICTs should be integrated into programmes that assist with poverty alleviation and empowerment of women;
- To introduce mandatory requirement that all ICT and development projects include a gender dimension and specific activities to increase women's access to ICT facilities and applications and participation in ICT sector;
- To define measurable performance indicators to identify the impact of funded projects on the lives of girls and women; and
- To ensure that there is consideration and integration of the gender dimension in global ICT governance.

#### **10. All stakeholders**

- To commit to work in partnership, to ensure co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration in the development of a shared vision and common understanding of a World Information Society that contributes to human development based on agreed principles including recognition of women's human rights and right to communicate;
- To commit to reducing the disparities that currently exist in access to and participation in the Information Society, particularly with respect to the widening gender digital divide;
- To actively encourage, facilitate and support women's active participation in the Global Information Society;
- To commit to ensuring that ICTs be used as an effective tool in reaching collective goals of

- Gender equality and women's empowerment
  - Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
  - Achieving universal education
  - Reducing child and maternal mortality
  - Reducing gender based violence and child abuse
  - Improving access to health care and particular reproductive health and reduction of child mortality rates
  - Combating malaria, HIV/AIDS and other endemic diseases
  - Ensuring peace, human security and stability
  - Encouraging pursuit of freedom and good governance and increased democratic participation with protection of national, regional and global legitimate interests;
- To ensure that all the proposed training and capacity development programmes to support developing countries effective participation in the WSIS including the UNITAR programme integrates appropriate consideration of the gender dimension and includes full participation of women;
  - To integrate programme development at the World Summits on the Information Society with the regional and global preparation for World Conference on Women (Beijing+10) and other sustainable development initiatives particularly WSSD;
  - To use a broad information dissemination programme, that integrates radio traditional media and other 'low-technology' applications to widely distribute the results of the discussions and to invite broader participation in the development of a shared understanding and common vision;
  - To take forward the recommendations made in this document beyond Bamako 2002 particularly in all of the preparatory processes for the WSIS 2003 and 2005;
  - To provide specific opportunities for the discussion and further elaboration of the issues raised and the recommendations made to be included in the programme of activities planned for Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005; and
  - To actively engage in mobilising human and financial resources that are required to integrate efforts for reducing the gender digital divide into the work programme arising from the World Summit on the Information Society.

May 2002

## **Position of African Women in relation to ICTs**

1. For many women in Africa, the challenge is to overcome a double burden of marginalisation. The marginalisation of Africa is characterised by increased poverty, lack of infrastructure, conflicts, deepening rural/urban disparities and high illiteracy. Women's burden is heavier in all these aspects because women represent the majority of the poor and illiterate. The relative high cost of access to ICT facilities and equipment as well as the unavailability of access to funding and credit also contribute to this burden. Further, the unavailability of appropriate technologies designed for an African context exacerbates the problems of women's access and participation in ICT and in the Information Society. Gender discrimination excludes the majority of women from benefiting from the opportunities that ICTs offer as a tool and catalyst for development and all human enterprise.
2. The ICT sector is dominated by values which favour profit over human well being. This lack of concern for human development objectives does not augur well for women in Africa. Within the firms, markets and institutional contexts through which ICTs are diffused, power relations do not advance women's empowerment and the agenda of the few groups representing the interests of gender equality and human development in policy processes are marginalised. These groups occupy low status and are seen to have little relevance. In addition, women are underrepresented in all aspects of decision-making in operations, policy and regulation. Unless this dominant culture and its related practices are changed, rapid diffusion of ICTs will contribute little to gender equality and human development for the world's majority.
3. The failure to achieve greater equity in access to the Information Society poses greater risks that the African region and women in that region will fall further behind, becoming more marginalised and excluded. The Information Society as it is presently constituted does not reflect different women's concerns, needs and interests and fails to recognise and protect women's human rights and dignity. This failure is leading to the imposition of external models and perspectives that will aggravate present conditions of poverty and exclusion. The concept on the Information Society as it stands now, leads to an absence of an African, and an African women's perspective.
4. Women are seen as passive receivers of information rather than actors able to shape and contribute to decision making and policy formulation in general and in the ICT sector in particular. African women are able to contribute to the formulation and implementation of creative solutions to the digital divide and are legitimate partners and actors in building an Information Society in Africa.
5. ICTs and the upgrading of human capacity are increasingly considered to be agents for development. It is, therefore, critical to ensure equal access and gender equity in the Information Society. Increased access to ICTs can uplift African women's livelihood through:
  - Greater access to and control of local and international markets for African women producers and traders
  - Employment and other profit-related opportunities which do not require a physical presence thereby allowing women to combine the care economy with their professional roles
  - Promotion of health, nutrition, education and other human development opportunities
  - The capacity to mobilise for women's empowerment and societal well being.