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June 14, 2002

Dear Mr. Gagné,

UNIFEM regards the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) as an important opportunity to address the issue of gender equality in access to and shaping the policies that guide information and communication technologies.

UNIFEM is committed to ensuring that women, particularly poor women, are not excluded from the benefits of ICTs. Over time, we have been expanding our efforts to support women and women's organizations to make effective use of ICTs and influence the policies that shape their development and deployment. Women's participation in ICT policy formulation processes and the inclusion of gender concerns in ICT policies are critical components of an ICT environment that is conducive to gender equality and development for all.

UNIFEM was privileged to provide support to the Gender Caucus at the Africa regional conference for WSIS in Bamako. We welcome the gender caucus' call for inclusion of a gender perspective in the WSIS preparatory process and hope that their recommendations will be taken into account as planning for the WSIS continues. We look forward to continuing to support initiatives aimed at ensuring that gender considerations form an integral part of the outcome of the WSIS.

I hope that you will not hesitate to call on UNIFEM and its partners to strengthen the gender perspective in the WSIS process. I am looking forward to our future cooperation in this regard and I extend to you my best wishes for a successful outcome of the Summit.

Yours sincerely,

Joanne Sandler  
Officer-in-Charge

Mr. Pierre Gagné  
Executive Director  
Executive Secretariat of the World Summit on the Information Society  
International Telecommunication Union  
Place des Nations  
1211 Geneva 20  
Switzerland

**WSIS Gender Caucus**  
**c/o UNIFEM ( United Nations Development Fund for Women)**  
**UNIFEM, Africa Section**  
**304 East 45<sup>th</sup> Street, Room FF-1508**  
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**6/13/2002**

**Attention:**

**Executive Director**

**Mr P. Gagne**

**WSIS Executive Secretariat**

**Geneva**

**By Fax+ 41 22 730 63 93**

**cc:**

**Mr Mamadou Lamine Diallo, President, Mali Secretariat Bamako2002**

**Mr Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary General ITU**

**Mr Hamadoun Toure, Director ITU BDT**

**Ms Pat Faccin, ITU Task Force Gender Issues**

**Mr K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary (UN-ECA)**

**Dr K. Bounemra Ben Soltane Director DISD (UN-ECA)**

**Hon. Mr G.O. Segond, Special Ambassador of the World Summit**

**Hon. Mr Ahmed Mahjoub, State Secretary, Special Representative of Tunisia**

**Mr Jean Mutai, African Telecommunication Union**

**Mr. Sergei Kambalov, UN ICT Task Force**

**Gender Considerations at the African Regional Preparatory Meeting  
for the World Summit on the Information Society**

**Bamako, Mali**

**25 – 30 May 2002**

The WSIS Gender Caucus held its first meeting during the African Regional Preparatory Meeting for WSIS in Bamako, Mali between 25 – 30 May 2002 ("Bamako 2002") and will continue to work to ensure that gender issues and gender dimensions are integrated into the World Summit on the Information Society ("WSIS"). The WSIS Gender Caucus formed at Bamako 2002 welcomes the efforts made by UNIFEM to support its formation.

We note that the official programme of Bamako 2002 contained no sessions that dealt explicitly with gender issues and that women were underrepresented among panellists and presenters in official plenary and workshop sessions. The absence of gender issues will result in many missed opportunities to consider women's perspectives on how the Information Society can benefit Africa in an inclusive manner. By leaving Africa's girls and women out of the equation, we will not create an Information Society that contributes to sustainable human development.

Despite the lack of involvement in the formal programme of the conference, the WSIS Gender Caucus met and carried out its work programme. The achievements of the group include preparation of a statement for inclusion in the official declaration of Bamako2002 that was circulated to all participants and several communiqués that were widely distributed. The statement of the WSIS Gender Caucus outlines a number of recommendations all of which are important for the task which is at the heart of the WSIS process --creating a common vision and strategy for the World Information Society. The WSIS Gender Caucus urges the African and international community engaged in the preparation for the WSIS to act now to reduce the widening gender digital divide within the digital divide faced by Africa and other developing regions. In particular, the WSIS Gender Caucus urges all stakeholders to act now to incorporate a gender dimension in the preparations for the WSIS. We cannot afford to miss this opportunity for an inclusive process. We propose that the following actions be taken immediately by the WSIS Executive Secretariat:

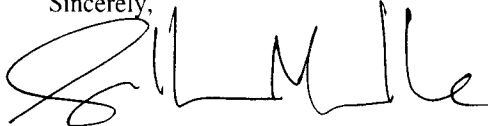
- Invite participation by representatives of the WSIS Gender Caucus in the official programme of the Global PrepCom 1 (July 1-5, 2002);
- Include Gender and ICT policy training in any of the capacity development programmes that are planned for WSIS, including WSIS-TRAIN;
- Encourage member states to involve National Machineries dealing with women's and gender issues in national preparations and to include representatives in delegations for the PrepCom and the Summits.

The WSIS Gender Caucus believes that there should be representation of at least 30% women on delegations, as well as individuals and groups with technical expertise in gender and women's rights; and

- UNIFEM and other advocates for gender in the UN system need to be strongly represented on the HLSOC and be invited to the next meeting of HLSOC focal points, which is planned for June 25th 2002;

The WSIS Gender Caucus urges those leading the preparations for the WSIS to ensure that gender issues are integrated into the entire process and to avoid a repeat of Bamako 2002. The WSIS Gender Caucus stands ready to provide every assistance and considerable expertise in ensuring that the concerns of women and gender equality become an integral part of the WSIS preparatory process.

Sincerely,



Gillian Marcelle  
For and behalf of the WSIS Gender Caucus  
Email: [aisgwg@worldonline.co.za](mailto:aisgwg@worldonline.co.za)

The formation group of the WSIS gender caucus consists of representatives from the following organisations:-

1. ABANTU for Development
2. ACWICT
3. African Connection Programme
4. AIS-GWG
5. AMARC-WIN
6. AMARC Africa
7. APC Africa Women's Programme
8. AQ Solutions
9. Association of YAM-Bukri
10. ENDA
11. GEEP
12. FEMNET
13. MISA
14. NDIMA
15. Network of African Women Economists
16. UNDP/SURF West Africa
17. UNIFEM
18. Unite d'appui au programme de la cooperation Canada-Malienne
19. WomensNet(SA)
20. WOUGNET
21. ZWRCN
22. Zimbabwe Ministry of Transport and Communications