Gender and information and communication technologies

Task Manager: ITU

<p style="text-align:center"><u>**Report from the Task Force on Gender and ICTs**</u>
(submitted by ITU)</p>

<u>Background</u>

1. In June 2001 the members of the Task Force were requested to submit information about activities in support of the WSIS preparations and ideas on how gender could be included in the preparations and outcome from the WSIS and about work undertaken within each organization to ensure that sufficient attention was being paid to gender issues in the process. The return from the members of the Task Force was very rich and constituted an important background for the information note submitted to the Task Force at its brainstorming meeting in ITU on 29 January 2002 from which a number of recommendations for action were adopted for submission to the Inter-Agency Network.

<u>Recommendations on WSIS</u>

2. The Task Force proposed in the first instance to provide additional comments and proposals for the proposed Themes for the Summit. The recommendations for change in the already existing Themes are shown in Annex I to this report. The Task Force recommends that IANWGE adopt the changes proposed and submit the list officially as an input into the first Preparatory Committee meeting through the organizations which are participating in the HLSOC.

3. The report from the meeting of the Task Force of 29 January is attached as Annex II to this report.

4. In addition, the following recommendations are addressed to IANWGE:

- **Members of IANWGE to provide**
  - A list of ICT and gender initiatives in their organization
  - A list of upcoming events in each organization as possible lead-ins for discussion of WSIS and circulation of invitations to other members of IANWGE.

- IANWGE to propose procedures and roles **for integration of NGOs** and civil society in the Summit

- IANWGE members to contribute to a publication on the work of each organization in ICTs and other areas included in the Information Society with a gender perspective (working title: "Aspects of the Information Society from a Gender Perspective")

- Disseminate IANWGE publication on "Aspects of the Information Society with a Gender perspective" as part of WSIS official documentation.

- Organize a "gender space" to accommodate the following activities:

  - **Panel sessions** with themes such as:
    - "Gender issues and business: support services using e-tools"
    - "Women as managers"
    - "ICT and gender capacity building"

- **Exhibition space** for UN Agencies and Women's NGOs to exhibit special projects, programmes featuring gender and ICTs
- Discussion and meeting areas

5. The Task Force also proposes to establish an expert roster of specialists who could be requested to provide input into possible forum debates. The roster should include representatives from UN Agencies, Government representatives, NGOs and other representatives of civil society.

6. The Task Force finally requested the Task Manager to prepare a short "summary" outlining the gender dimensions, opportunities and challenges of WSIS. The summary could be used as flash sheet for the members of IANWGE and for NGOs and other interested parties.

Other Recommendations

7. As a follow-up to the survey which was made during 2000 and presented to last year's meeting of IANWGE a questionnaire was sent out to all members of IANWGE on past, current and planned projects in the respective organizations on Gender and Information and Communications Technologies. The analysis of the returns is attached as Annex II to this report.

8. In view of the urgency of the work concerning the World Summit on Information Society it is recommended that the Task Force continue to concentrate during the upcoming period on this part of its mandate as a first priority.

9. The Task Force proposes to include as part of the information to be submitted to the Summit itself an overview of the ongoing work in all member organizations on Gender and ICTs based on the surveys which are being conducted regularly by the Task Force. In order to provide an accurate picture of these activities, it is therefore of utmost importance that all members of IANWGE provide this information to the Task Force at the earliest possible date and that we try to keep this information as up-to-date as possible. Subject to availability of funds it is proposed to put this information on the Web for all members of IANWGE to be able to consult at their convenience. The Website may also be opened for other interested parties at a later stage.

Building the infrastructure
- The role of telecommunications, investment and technology in creating the Information Society infrastructure and bridging the Digital Divide, taking into consideration divides such as gender, rural/urban and Developed/Developing Country divide.

Opening the gates
- Achieving universal and equitable access for men and women to the Information Society
- Meeting the needs of the developing world, taking into consideration gender gaps and rural/urban divide.
- Guaranteeing the right to Information as a common public good.

Services and applications
- The relevance and impact of the Information Society on economic, social and cultural development.
- Opportunities and challenges of the Information Society in meeting the Millinnium Development Goals *
- The implications of the Information Society for science (what is meant by the term "science"? It seems very restrictive. Does it include applications such as health, telemedicine and HIV/AIDS?)

The needs of users
- Consumer protection, privacy and security, for example: trafficking, cyber crimes, pedophilia, pornography, terrorism
- Relevant content, reflecting cultural and language diversity and the right to communicate
- Ethics of the Information Society
- Equal access of men and women to users training
- Worker protection and workplace privacy (What is intended by the term "worker"?) Rethinking employment and work place, with particular emphasis on home based work.

Developing guiding principles of a framework
- The roles of government, the private sector and civil society in shaping the Information Society
- Applying principles of equity and gender perspectives in setting up the framework
- Guaranteeing the right to Information as a common public good (public domain information)
- Intellectual property rights and legal exceptions
- Telecommunication and Internet access tariff policies.

ICTs and Education
- ICTs as a lever for educational change to achieve the Millennium Development Goals [1]
- The learning environment: ICTs, teachers, learners and content
- Active use of ICTs as a learning tool to contribute to women's empowerment
- The needs of currently employed workers (what is intended by this phrase?)

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[1] Related United Nations Millinnium Development Goals:
- Education: To narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to ensure that, by 2015, all children complete a full course of primary education.
- Youth employment: to develop strategies to reduce joblessness among youth.
- Building Digital Bridges: to review [government] policies in order to remove regulatory and pricing impediments to Internet access, to make sure people are not denied the opportunities offered by the digital revolution. Private Sector: to develop strong partnerships with the private sector, at both national and international levels, to combat poverty in all its aspects.

MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE ON GENDER AND ICT'S
IANWGE
ITU, Geneva, 29 January 2002

Participants:

ITC	Sabine Meitzel
FAO	Sophie Treinen
UNDP	Aster Zaoudé
UNESCO	Anna Maria Majlöf
UNV	Dirk Debruyne
ITU	Hanne Laugesen
	Pat Faccin

Observers:

Norway	Eva Hildrum
	Ingunn Yssen

Background

As Task Manager of the IANWGE Task Force on Gender and ICTs, ITU called a meeting of the Task Force on 29 January 2002 to look into ways and means of, and coordinate a system-wide strategy for, ensuring that a gender perspective is included in the preparatory work and the outcome of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in close cooperation with other interested United Nations Agencies and the United Nations.

This was a brainstorming meeting on 1) the best ways of proceeding further, 2) to develop an Action Plan to determine where IAMWGE could have the most impact to ensure inclusion of a gender perspective in all aspects of the preparation and the outcome of the Summit and 3) to see how each organization could work with its own internal structure and constituency and in particular the NGOs and other representatives of civil society who will be partners in the World Summit.

An overall view of the organization and preparations for WSIS was given by Hanne Laugesen through a power-point presentation on action already taken in the UN organizations under the auspices of HLSOC.

> **Important milestones to recall**:
> ➢ First Prepcom: Geneva, 1-5 July 2002
> ➢ Second and third Prepcoms; Spring, Fall 2003
> ➢ First phase WSIS: Geneva, 10-12 December 2003
> ➢ Second phase WSIS: Tunis, 2005

In addition to the activities directly related to the WSIS many organizations had events which could be used as entry points for pushing the inclusion on a gender perspective in the Summit discussions. In ITU for example the upcoming World Telecommunications Development Conference 2002 in March and the Plenipotentiary Conference 2002 in September/October constituted such events. In FAO there was the World Food Summit +5 in June 2002 and a Ministerial meeting on the Digital Divide and Rural Workers, etc.

The meeting agreed on the vital role that a Gender Advisor could play as part of the Executive Secretariat of WSIS. UNDP and UNIFEM are jointly endeavoring to find funding and all participants were urged to continue to investigate other possibilities, such as in-kind contribution of expertise.

In discussions on how to deal with the preparatory process, the group discussed each of the WSIS themes and proposed that the following changes be incorporated to ensure that a gender perspective is discussed and included from the first preparatory meeting scheduled 1-5 July 2002.

Proposed themes:

Building the infrastructure
- The role of telecommunications, investment and technology in creating the Information Society infrastructure and bridging the Digital Divide, taking into consideration divides such as gender, rural/urban and Developed/Developing Country divide.

Opening the gates
- Achieving universal and equitable access for men and women to the Information Society
- Meeting the needs of the developing world, taking into consideration gender gaps and rural/urban divide.
- Guaranteeing the right to Information as a common public good.

Services and applications
- The relevance and impact of the Information Society on economic, social and cultural development.
- Opportunities and challenges of the Information Society in meeting the Millinnium Development Goals *
- The implications of the Information Society for science
- (what is meant by the term "science"? It seems very restrictive. Does it include applications such as health, telemedicine and HIV/AIDS?)

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- Consumer protection, privacy and security, for example: trafficking, cyber crimes, pedophilia, pornography, terrorism
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Developing guiding principles of a framework
- The roles of government, the private sector and civil society in shaping the Information Society
- Applying principles of equity and gender perspectives in setting up the framework

- Guaranteeing the right to Information as a common public good (public domain information)
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ICTs and Education
- ICTs as a lever for educational change to achieve the Millennium Development Goals *
- The learning environment: ICTs, teachers, learners and content
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- The needs of currently employed workers (what is intended by this phrase?)

For maximum impact, inter-agency networking and input from individual organizations will be essential. The meeting agreed that the following action should to be proposed to the next meeting of IANWGE:

Recommendations for action:
I. Preparatory phrase:
- **Members of IANWGE to provide**
- A list of ICT and gender initiatives in their organization
- A list of upcoming events in each organization as possible lead-ins for discussion of WSIS and circulation of invitations to other members of IANWGE.

- Hanne Laugesen to prepare a **short "summary" outlining the gender dimensions**, opportunities and challenges of WSIS. Flash sheet to be disseminated at IANWGE, sent to NGOs and other interested parties.

- Task Force to present the above amendments to the themes to IANWGE for endorsement and appropriate action within UN System and each organization represented in IANWGE.
- Task Force to establish an **experts'roster** of specialists who could be requested to provide input into possible forum debates. Roster should include representatives from UN agencies, government representatives, NGOs & other representatives of civil society,

- IANWGE to propose procedures and roles **for integration of NGOs** and civil society in the Summit

- IANWGE members to contribute to a publication on the work of each organization in ICTs and other areas included in the Information Society with a gender perspective (working title: "Aspects of the Information Society from a Gender Perspective")

II. **During the Summit:**

- Disseminate IANWGE publication on "Aspects of the Information Society with a Gender perspective" as part of WSIS official documentation.

- Organize a "gender space" to accommodate the following activities:

  - **Panel sessions** with themes such as:

- "Gender issues and business: support services using e-tools"
- "Women as managers"
- "ICT and gender capacity building"

- **Exhibition space** for UN Agencies and Women's NGOs to exhibit special projects, programmes featuring gender and ICTs
- Discussion and meeting areas

Conclusion

The meeting was considered an excellent opportunity to begin the process of coordination and collaboration to ensure that the voices of women are heard at WSIS.

* Related United Nations Millinnium Development Goals:
- Education: To narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to ensure that, by 2015, all children complete a full course of primary education.
- Youth employment: to develop strategies to reduce joblessness among youth.
- Building Digital Bridges: to review [government] policies in order to remove regulatory and pricing impediments to Internet access, to make sure people are not denied the opportunities offered by the digital revolution. Private Sector: to develop strong partnerships with the private sector, at both national and international levels, to combat poverty in all its aspects.

Annex III

Report of Survey on Project, Programmes on Gender and ICTs

1. Some 120 questionnaires were sent to around 100 Organizations and Departments/Offices of the United Nations. Of these more than twenty were returned. Three of these replied that they had no particular project/programme on Gender and ICTs.

2. The remaining responses received indicate that most projects/programmes fall in three main categories: 1) capacity building for empowerment, 2) awareness raising and provision of access to ICTs and ICT-based activities (telecentres, distance learning, etc), and 3) creation of Web based information and networking.

3. The sheer diversity and richness of the various undertakings make it very difficult to further summarize the inputs. For the time being, a compendium of the information received is available in paper form and it is the intension to use the information as the basis for a Website on Gender and ICTs where the information can be shared and supplemented by the Organizations as we progress.

Annex IV

IANWGE

Members of Task Force on Gender and ICTs

DAW
UNIFEM
ESCAP
UNDP
INSTRAW
UNESCO
WORLDBANK
ITC
FAO
UNV