ACCELERATING WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT TO ACHIEVE THE 2030 AGENDA

How can the recommendations of the UNSG HLP reports contribute to the acceleration of the implementation of the SDGs? What actions do you intend to take towards this end?

Partnerships for impact: How can we realize multi-partner collaboration and shared accountability for women’s economic empowerment?

Tools to leverage: How can ICT support women’s economic empowerment? And what is the role of business and other stakeholders?

REMARKS

Sometimes our discussions can get very technical. There are indicators and targets. And of course, this is essential. But today, I’d like to go back to the basics. At ITU, our core mission is to help connect the world. But how can we connect the world if half of humanity does not have the same access to ICTs than the other half?

We need to remember that access to ICTs is a development indicator and aspiration in and of itself. Each time we bring more women and girls online, not only do we take one more step towards achieving gender equality, but we accelerate the implementation of all SDGs.

Now, connectivity alone won’t be enough. Women and girls must not just have access to ICTs; we must also empower women and girls with the skills to become ICT creators, leaders and entrepreneurs.

That’s an important lesson of the “Action Plan to Close the Digital Divide” that we launched a couple of years ago here in New York with many of the partners behind today’s event. Digital inclusion can only be effective and meaningful when there is awareness of the benefits of connectivity, the skills and confidence to exploit it -- and affordable, attractive content that meets women’s needs.

And that’s where I want to turn to those of you in the private sector and civil society. We need fresh investment and collaboration models -- public-private partnerships -- to unlock the power of ICT connectivity and fast-forward progress on the SDGs. Or else, we risk widening the divides between those positioned to reap the rewards of technological change and those that risk being left behind.

I am very proud to announce ITU’s partnership with UN Women on “EQUALS”. We want to generate an unstoppable global movement -- with a broad global partnership of like-minded
programmes in the public and private sectors -- where women and girls are equal participants in today’s digital technology revolution.

We’ve got our work cut out for us. Together, for example, we have to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, and guarantee them a safe access to and use of ICTs. We have to promote women-owned enterprises and support the emergence of female tech entrepreneurs. We have to make digital financial inclusion a priority, as financial inclusion can be a multiplier for poverty eradication, job creation, gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The 2030 Agenda has made universal access to ICTs a priority.

We have clear directions. We are guided by the outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women. And we are glad to see how the recommendations of the UNSG’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment are addressing the major challenges and setting the basis for taking actions on women’s economic empowerment.

The path forward is to leave no one behind.

Let’s reaffirm our commitment to a future where no one is offline.

I look forward to working with all of you.

Thank you.

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