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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by American Association of University Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Access to and Participation in Information Communication Technologies Are Critical for Gender Equality

The American Association of University Women supports the 62nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women; the priority theme, Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls; and Review theme: Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (agreed conclusions of the forty-seventh session).

We reaffirm our support of Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its comprehensive and human rights-focused set of universal Sustainable Development Goals and targets. We support U.N. Women's efforts and advocacy to achieve Planet 50-50 by 2030 and U.N. Women's call for United Nations' bodies and Member States to Step It Up for Gender Equality.

We applaud the commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social, and environmental — and recognize that sustainable development cannot be achieved without gender equality and that all Member states and entities must take significant and decisive action to end the persistent global gender gaps and reach gender equality by 2030.

We reaffirm the accomplishments of the Millennium Development Goals to ensure the promotion of gender equality and girls' and women's development and uphold the importance of addressing the critical unmet solutions.

The American Association of University Women, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization, has more than 170,000 global members and supporters as well as more than 1,000 branches and more than 800 college and university members. As stated in the 2017–19 Public Policy Priorities:

The Association believes that global interdependence requires national and international policies against human trafficking and that promote peace, justice, human rights, sustainable development, and mutual security for all people. We support the civil and human rights of all immigrants, including a fair and just path to legal status. We support a strengthened United Nations and its affiliated agencies. We advocate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the 4th World Conference on Women and subsequent declarations. We affirm our active participation in the UN Commission on the Status of Women and our commitment to ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. We support international family planning programs that are consistent with the Association's policy.

The Association supports participation in and access of women to information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of girls in women. We believe that advancement is possible for women and girls through our proven programs, and we will continue to push for improved gender equality in information and communications technologies. Access to equipment and acquiring the relevant skills that are rapidly becoming the most in demand in the world is vitally important — but girls and women are being left behind. Stereotypes, gender bias, and the hostile climate of academic departments and workplaces continue to block participation and progress.

Participation in and access to information and communications technologies is a key component of sustainable development and poverty eradication. New data

from the International Telecommunication Union show that only 41 percent of women have access to information and communications technologies worldwide and that young people are at the forefront of today's information society: 830 million young people (representing more than 80 percent of the youth population in 104 countries) are online. For full achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its targets, the Association recognizes that the gender digital divide in access to information and communications technologies exacerbates existing inequalities and has enduring effects on girls and women.

As former Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon declared in his statement during the 2014 World Summit on Information Society high-level meeting in Geneva, "Information and communication technologies have long been recognized as key enablers for bridging the digital divide and achieving the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, environmental balance, and social inclusion."

Through our research, programs, education, and advocacy the Association offers specific strategies and actions that are proven to increase the representation of women in computing and information technologies, and we strive to highlight data and solutions on critical issues affecting girls and women.

Our 2015 research report *Solving the Equation: The Variables for Women's Success in Engineering and Computing* presented the latest data on women's status in engineering and computing, examined how few women are working in these fields, and offered actionable solutions. Although women make up nearly half of all employees in the U.S. economy, they hold only 26 percent of computing and information technology jobs.

Our cutting-edge programs address environmental and social challenges that impact girls' and women's participation and interest in information computer technologies. In one year alone, the Association executed more than 150 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs in 35 states and 93 congressional districts, reaching more than 10,000 girls and their families. Our educational funding of graduate women and community projects broadens the community of girls and women who gain access to education, practical training, and economic opportunities in the math and science fields. Our long history of advocacy from the classroom to Capitol Hill has helped increase women's opportunities in science, technology, and engineering and influenced local and federal action.

In order to fully realize the participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women, the Association calls for full implementation of the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, we urge Member States to:

Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women (Sustainable Development Goal 5);

Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university (Sustainable Development Goal 4);

Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship (Sustainable Development Goal 4);

Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with

disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations (Sustainable Development Goal 4).

The Association also recognizes the 16 December 2015 Outcome Document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Overall Review of the Implementation of World Summit on Information Society Outcomes, (A/RES/70/125). Specifically, we:

Call on all governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, the technical and academic communities, and all other relevant stakeholders to integrate information and communications technologies in their implementation approaches to the Sustainable Development Goals;

Encourage all stakeholders to ensure the full participation of women in the information society and women's access to new technologies, especially information and communications technologies for development;

Commit to harnessing the potential of information and communications technologies to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed development goals, noting that information and communications technologies can accelerate progress across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals;

Call for immediate measures to achieve gender equality in internet users by 2020, especially by significantly enhancing women's and girls' education and participation in information and communications technologies, as users, content creators employees, entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders.

Progress for girls and women depends on their participation in and access to information and communications technologies and connectivity across the world. We must eliminate the digital divide in order to empower girls and women and enable Member States, United Nations' bodies, civil society, and governments to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda for a thriving and equitable world for all.
