

## Opening remarks

**Carolyn Hannan, Director  
Division for the Advancement of Women  
Panel organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

**“Women 2000 and beyond. Gender equality  
and empowerment of women through ICT”  
28 February 2006**

Distinguished delegates  
Panelists  
Colleagues and friends

It is my pleasure to moderate this afternoon’s panel discussion on *Women 2000 and beyond. Gender equality and empowerment of women through ICT*. I thank all the participants for showing their interest in the topic of the panel: to bridge the “gender digital divide” in all its manifestations and to promote gender equality and empowerment of women at all levels of society through the effective use of ICT. I extend a warm welcome to our panelists, who will have agreed to share their experience with us today.

Let me first give you a little background on why the Division has organized this panel.

Recognizing the growing importance of information technology in a globalizing world, the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2003 adopted agreed conclusions on “*Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women*”. The Commission noted that the media and ICT offer tools for enhancing women’s full access to the benefits of information and new technologies and can become central for women’s empowerment and the promotion of gender equality.

These agreed conclusions were forwarded by the Commission to the Secretariat for the WSIS I in Geneva and WSIS II in Tunis in order to ensure attention to gender perspectives in the discussions and outcomes of the summits. The agreed conclusions were utilized by Member States, UN entities and non-governmental organizations and did have an impact on the outcomes, although not as much as would have been desired.

The Declaration of Principles, adopted at the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003, reaffirmed that the development of information and communication technologies provided enormous opportunities for women.

Nancy Hafkin, will talk about the gender perspectives on ICT more generally. The outcome of WSIS II from a gender perspective will be presented by **Marvic XXX**

### **Agreed conclusions on national machineries**

The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is carrying out a technical assistance project “*Capacity-building for national machineries for the advancement of women in promoting gender equality in Africa and Western Asia*”.

Over the past three decades, national machineries have been established in almost all countries of the world. They play an important role in promoting, designing, implementing, and monitoring policies that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, and in facilitating gender mainstreaming in all policy areas. However, they continue to face many constraints to implementing their work effectively including constraints related to mandates, location, power and resources—continue to persist. These constraints are reflected in access to and utilization of ICT, particularly in Africa.

Four sub-regional workshops and a regional meeting were organized in Africa by the Division during 2004 and 2005 to develop the capacity of national machineries to take full advantage of new information and communications technologies to strengthen networking, information sharing, and knowledge management to enhance their effectiveness in national policy-making and planning processes for gender equality.

During the workshops, representatives of national machineries noted an increased interest in women and ICT, including through the establishment of specific projects, and reported on their efforts to secure budget allocations for ICT for national machineries. In many cases, however, the national machineries also indicated that they have relatively little knowledge of or access to ICT. They were not informed about or involved in important policy processes at national level and the preparations for the WSIS summits. The workshops provided an opportunity to discuss the need for increased research on women’s access to and use of ICT, as well as to mainstream gender perspectives into all research, policy development, and programmes on ICT for development. During the workshops, sub-regional list serves of national machineries were established to encourage national machineries to use ICT to implement their mandates, for example, by facilitating exchange of information on advocacy and on working as catalysts for gender mainstreaming.

At the regional-level meeting, held in Addis Ababa in September 2005, representatives of national machineries and ICT policy makers developed a Strategic Framework for Further Action to ensure follow-up to the technical assistance programme. A Declaration was also adopted by participants at the regional meeting and work began on the development of a regional e-network for national machineries in the African region, in collaboration with ECA. The findings of the regional meeting were presented at a panel organized by the Division at the WSIS in Tunis in November last year. The

representatives of national machineries shared information on the progress made, and lessons learned, including specific challenges faced, in utilizing ICT to support achievement of their goals, including in relation to integrating gender perspectives into national ICT policies, establishing websites, and developing regional and sub-regional e-networks. They also shared information on activities undertaken by their national machineries as a result of their participation in the workshops organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women. Francesca Pobee-Hayford from Ghana will provide further information from the perspective of the national machineries.

In 2005, the Division for the Advancement of Women prepared a publication "*Women 2000 and Beyond: Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women through ICT*" as a contribution to efforts to bring gender perspectives to the centre of attention in WSIS II. This is the title of our panel today. Ms Hafkins one of the panelists was one of the authors of the publication. (A second author, Chat Garcia Ramilo, was also supposed to be on the panel but at the very last moment was not able to attend the CSW). The publication is also part of the Division's ongoing efforts to promote the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The publication provides an analysis of the linkages between gender equality and ICT and of the achievements and challenges in bringing attention to gender equality in ICT policies and programmes. It is hoped that this publication will be of use in the post-WSIS phase, as we attempt to find ways to ensure women participate in and benefit fully from the information society. Mr Sergei Kambalov will provide an overview of the WSIS outcome and discuss ways in which gender equality advocates can work in the context of this outcome to achieve the goals of greater access and utilization of ICT by women around the world.

I would now like to open the floor up to the panelists. In order to ensure that we have an interactive dialogue, the panelists have been requested to limit their presentation to the most pertinent issues of their selected topic in no more than 7 minutes. Participants will then be invited to speak from the floor after these presentations and to limit their comments and questions to a maximum of 2 minutes in order to allow all those who wish to contribute to the discussion ample opportunity to do so.

Thank you to all of our panelists. Let's now move to interactive discussion. Participants are invited to speak from the floor—and are asked to keep their comments and questions to a maximum of 2 minutes.