

STATEMENT TO THE PANEL ON ICT AT THE 47<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON  
THE STATUS OF WOMEN, UN NEW YORK, 3 MARCH 2003

By Conchita Poncini  
International Federation of Business and Professional Women

Thank you Mr. Chairperson

I speak on behalf of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women and as President of the Geneva-Based NGO Committee on the Status of Women of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO) (a coalition of over 65 INGOs). I have been mandated by the Gender Caucus to the World Summit on Information Society, a multi-stake holder group of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, parliaments and national governments, who contribute to the preparatory process of the WSIS, to transmit to this August Body our concern that the Prepcom of WSIS has not highlighted gender equality except by NGOs and international organizations. It has not included either a gender perspective in its action plan in the Draft Declaration of Action.

We call on you to express these concerns to WSIS and our expectations that the proceedings here at CSW on ICT and the Media, will be integrated into the WSIS process. More specifically, to include the following:

1. As half of the population, women are both vectors and agents of change and not victims, who have a legitimate rights to self-expression and to have equal access to the information society, which is affordable to all women to bridge the digital divide and eradicate poverty;
2. Policies have to address, in particular, building the human capacity of women (and men) through education in ICTs at the early stage of life and throughout their life course and to give children especially the girl-child early exposure to science and technology;
3. ICT policies and enabling institutional mechanisms should also be introduced so that the potentials of women to advance in E-Work and E-Commerce be promoted and stimulate empathetic women;
4. The gender digital divide has been caused by the lack of adequate representation of women in the media and in the higher levels of policy and decision-making on economic and political aspects in information and communication technologies; women are not involved as internet providers, web designers, software programmers or computer troubleshooters;
5. Policies should also address the syndrome of the race to the bottom of wages and conditions of women in ICTs especially in export processing zones and back office operations mostly in developing countries. Decent work is a human right of women and must be pursued in ICTs;
6. We call on the CSW to use women's models of best practices in e-work and e-business to input into the WSIS;
7. Finally, we stress the vital importance of having transparent gender and age disaggregated data.

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