CSW67 Written Statement

Partnership in equipping women and girls with technological resilience, and protecting them from abuse and violence through the misuse of technology

Priority theme: Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) on behalf of its members in 97 countries, strongly expresses its support and need for the international community to work for the the priority theme on the importance of "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls."

The rapid expansion of the internet has enabled everybody and even those in vulnerable communities to access basic resources during difficult times such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Collaboration in development research through the metaverse, advancements in artificial intelligence and other innovations enabling easier access to resources for daily needs are additional examples of the growth and benefits reaped from the advancement of technology.

Amongst these, it is also crucial to note the need for empowering women and girls to be resilient, knowledgeable and confident in the age of rapid technological growth and innovation. It is also critically important to protect them from abuse and violence through the misuse of technology.

There is indeed an obvious need for technological access and advancement for economic and social growth in vulnerable societies such as in least developed countries and in war-torn and poverty-stricken communities. However, it is also important to note that internet and social media platforms can and have been used to capitalize upon the destructive habits and mindsets of individuals and exacerbate the disempowerment, vulnerabilities or exploitation of all people, especially women and girls. Examples include: Negative impacts of pornography, human trafficking and the black market, cyberbullying and abuse of mental health, disconnection from real relationships and cyber addiction. All are serious threats to healthy personal development, community cohesion and progress in the broader movement for gender equality and dignity of women.

Abuse of technology can lead to disconnected families, lack of emotional intelligence, disorientation, self destructiveness, depression, etc. These tendencies leave doors open to abuse and violence against women and girls, too often preventing their development mentally and emotionally. Therefore, additional support and empowerment of women and girls is needed to build resiliency to and protection from such abuses. Governments and other stakeholders

increasingly exhibit an awareness of the need for such initiatives. These efforts can and have been dramatically enhanced through the positive use of technology and its advancement.

Below are a few best practices which exhibit the importance of the safe and constructive use of technology and promotion of protecting women and girls from abuse and violence :

- **Community building for safe spaces for women and girls:** The UN Office on Drugs and Crime's "Family UNited" program supports parents in 30 low and middle income countries to be better caregivers, preventing a wide range of social and health problems, stating that "Parents set rules for acceptable behavior, closely monitor free time and friendship patterns and become good role models, helping their children to acquire skills to make informed choices." This includes the access to technological advancements, education for creating safe spaces online and the importance of community building.
- **Capacity building and education for safe spaces for women and girls:** The WFWPI in cooperation with several organizations such as the Global Development Enterprise, recently launched a three-month virtual training program to equip a new generation of leaders across five countries with a forward-looking approach to identify opportunities for growth and impact. The "Activate 2022 program" for example provides holistic, impact-driven and practical leadership training with the use of technological aid and innovations. It includes measures to ensure and promote the use and creation of safe spaces for women and girls in projects which involve technology. Several other projects of the Women's Federation, such as the The Sunhak Music and Peace Project in Venezuela, the Permaculture literacy program in the Philippines (https://www.wfwp.org/news/permaculture-literacy-program), the Bridge of Peace project held globally (https://www.wfwp.org/news/bridge-of-peace), etc have all supported the safe use of technology through the cultivation of stronger communities and individuals, safer spaces and sustainable practices with nature.
- **Peace building and mediation to promote women's rights and their safety:** The Youth Peace Conference series organized WFWPI simulates the UN Peacebuilding Commission to provide a platform for youth to interact virtually, with the use of modern technology to construct realistic peace agreements, including between Palestine and Israel and North and South Korea. In a similar vein, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women hosted a virtual CSW66 program in which youth participants notably from the global south, cooperated over several weeks to provide a set of Agreed Conclusions that were then sent to UN Women and the CSW66 Chair in advance of the actual intergovernmental debates.
- **Use of technology for basic services to protect women and girls:** Several state and non state projects have aimed to provide safe spaces for basic needs such as education, mental health services, etc for women and girls, who are more prone to violence and abuse in vulnerable societies. These programs propagated considerably during the COVID 19

pandemic through the use of advanced technology. National hotlines and support systems implemented in around more than 120 countries have provided support to those who are prone to violence or victims of abuse through the use of technology, trust-building and partnership.

WFWPI therefore in conclusion has the following recommendations for member states:

- *Encourage* member states to develop policies and funding streams that enable the implementation and expansion of access to programs and products that support mental and emotional wellbeing, especially for women and girls.
- *Urge* member states to continue to develop programs and policies that foster healthy family environments and empower families, and especially caregivers and educators, in raising up ethical and emotionally resilient children.
- *Insists* member states to implement policies and projects to ensure access to technology for all, especially for those of women and girls in vulnerable and underdeveloped societies.
- *Request* member states to promote and fulfill their duty to cooperate with all other member states, entities and actors such as the private sector and civil society to ensure access to technology for women and girls.
- *Insist*s that member states work closely with private sector models to regulate media, technology and network industries to protect women and children from abuse and violence of personal and mental spaces.
- *Recommend* member states to firmly implement policies aiming to provide basic access to health, education and other basic life needs through the use of advanced technology drawing upon good practices of NGOs.
- *Request* member states to use the advances in technology to promote peace and harmony while protecting any of its use for the promotion or acceptance of violence and conflict, which adversely affect women and girls and all humanity.
- *Strongly Urges* member states to ensure inclusivity and safe spaces for all, especially for women and girls in online and networking spaces.