

WSIS GENDER CAUCUS STATEMENT

BRIDGING THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Africa Launch of the Digital Diaspora Initiative and Global Advisory Committee meeting Kampala, Uganda (May 5th – 6th 2003)

The WSIS Gender Caucus congratulates UNIFEM, UN ICT Task Force, UNDP, UN DESA and UNFIP for their vision in devising the Digital Diaspora Initiative. We appreciate the invitation to participate in the launch of this project and commits to assist with the achievement of its objectives. As we have heard, the Digital Diaspora Initiative, aims to build strategic partnerships between African ICT entrepreneurs in the Diaspora and women's organizations and business associations in Africa. We believe that if this initiative succeeds it can implement projects that empower women economically through capacity building in the use of ICTs, identifying business opportunities, create business partnerships, and provide access to finance as well as building the knowledge-base on ICTs for poverty alleviation.

The WSIS Gender Caucus is a multi-stakeholder group consisting of women and men from national governments, civil society organizations, non-governmental organization, the private sector and the United Nations system. The strategic objective of the WSIS-Gender Caucus is to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are integrated into the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) and its outcome processes. Our focused objectives and involvement in the preparation for WSIS provides an opportunity for meaningful partnership.

The WSIS Gender Caucus can offer concrete and specific support to the Digital Diaspora Initiative in achieving its important objectives. To support the strategic objective to create an enabling environment for gender equality in ICT policy, the WSIS gender caucus in partnership with the DDI to organize and deliver:

Advocacy and Outreach activities on Gender and ICTs at a national level

- Through our network, we can assist with the organization of National Forums that raise awareness of the gender issues in Information Society, as part of preparations for WSIS. We have members of the network in Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, Rwanda, Malawi, Niger, Togo, Senegal, Egypt and Niger.
- These national forums can be valuable contribution to national preparations for WSIS, that brings together governments, UN system organizations and civil society organizations.
- Focusing this activity on the World Information Society will provide visibility and will add richly to the substantive concept of a World Information Society and ensure that WSIS is aligned with human development needs, including gender equality and promotion of women's human rights.

To meet the objective of capacity building for NGOs and governments, the WSIS Gender Caucus offers their services to the DDI project partners, to organize

Strategic Advocacy and Lobbying Training on ICT policy issues

- The WSIS Gender Caucus has urged governments to promote increased effective participation of women and gender advocates in all aspects of ICT, including at policy making and decision making levels. The Caucus has also called for national delegations to WSIS to include at least 30% women, particularly gender advocates. We recognize that gender advocates may require training on advocacy and lobbying skills and familiarization on ICT policy issues to enable them to make a valuable contribution at policy and decision-making levels.
- The Caucus will be organizing the first such training civil society organization in Uganda from June 16th – 20th. We invite the DDI partners to identify women's organizations in civil society that can participate in this training on ICT Policy.

To ensure that the perception and visibility of African women's involvement in the Information Society, including African Diaspora leaders, the WSIS Gender Caucus also commits to assist by:

Information Dissemination

Distributing information and spreading the word on innovative, good practices on African women and ICTs, through the WSIS Gender Caucus website and mailing list.

Researching, document and distributing "stories" of African women's leadership in the Information Society.

Thank you for the invitation to partner with this exciting and valuable initiative!

Contact the WSIS-Gender Caucus at secretariat-wsisgendercaucus@wougnnet.org

Join the caucus and contribute to its work. Information on membership and programme of action can be found on <http://www.wougnnet.org/WSIS/wsisgc.html>