



67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, General Discussion on the Priority Theme “*Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*” 9 March 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Hon Rebecca Buttigieg,
Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality

Excellencies,

Chair,

It is an honour for me to deliver this statement for the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Malta aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, the UN LGBTI Core Group, and the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls

The digitalisation of all areas of life presents unparalleled opportunities to address the root causes of gender inequality. We cannot let the long-standing and persistent gender-stereotypes and harmful social norms affecting women and girls, including multiple and **intersecting forms of discrimination**, be amplified and perpetuated online.

Digitalisation is key to fulfill the human rights of women and girls. We must ensure that the digital transformation is anchored in a **human rights-based**



approach that safeguards the full realisation of women's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Closing the **digital divide** is crucial in this regard. There can be no full enjoyment of human rights by all, without gender equality. And there can be no gender equality if women are not online. Malta is committed to ensuring that women and girls, **in all their diversity** have free, safe, and secure access to information and communications technologies.

Chair,

We must urgently address the devastating impact of **technology-facilitated gender-based violence**. This prevents women from the full enjoyment of their rights. When women's personal information or intimate images are distributed online without their consent; when social media is inundated with misogynist comments to intimidate women, threaten them or incite others to do so; or when information available online is illegally accessed, and exploited, to stalk or harass women, that is not an inconsequential form of violence. That is technology providing an enabling environment to facilitate and amplify gender-based violence. Member States should therefore work together towards an intergovernmentally-agreed definition that can guide evidence-based policymaking against this deeply worrying trend.



Apps, algorithms, and technology devices are the first line of defence for the millions of women and girls vulnerable to gender-based violence online. It is therefore critical that **gender-responsive** perspectives are embedded across the innovation and technology ecosystems, including in the design, development, evaluation, regulation, and deployment of existing and emerging technologies.

We call on Member States to address the pervasive impunity that prevails in cases of gender-based violence, and in **femicide** in particular, which only aggravates the institutional and structural violence facing women and girls. It is also imperative that women are at the frontlines of policy creation and legislative processes, to ensure that policies and laws take full account of these long-standing and persistent gender stereotypes.

Chair,

Technology is transforming lives and livelihoods. Women must benefit equally from the opportunities of the digital transformation, including by ensuring their access to **decent and quality education and labour opportunities** that allow them to realise their full potential. Also as a Security Council member for the term 2023-2024, Malta continues to support quality public education programs that promote **digital and media literacy** for women and girls, in a bid to enable them to leverage the opportunities of digital connectivity for their economic, political, and social empowerment.



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Women and girls bring diversity to research and provide fresh perspectives to science and technology, leading to better outcomes for our societies. We can and must do more to promote the inclusion and leadership of women in the technology sector and innovation ecosystems. This includes promoting career guidance programmes that encourage girls to pursue careers in **STEM and digital subjects**.

Chair,

Allow me to conclude by assuring you of Malta's full commitment to ending the gender digital divide and creating a digital environment free of gender-based violence, inequalities and discriminatory social norms and stereotypes. Sexual harassment and gender-based bullying have been present in our societies for too long, let us not let this scourge persist in the digital sphere as well.

I thank you.