

STATEMENT OF THE GENDER DYNAMIC COALITION
INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM 2011

Nairobi, Kenya

The Gender Dynamic Coalition would like to bring to the attention of the 6th UN IGF the continued gender imbalance in both the participation (as speakers and participants of workshops and sessions) and the substance of the discussions.

As the Internet rapidly transforms our lives and societies, we need to be cognizant of the way it transforms power, and recasts the rights of those in the margins, especially socially and economically marginalised women. We need to fully address cultural barriers to the full exercise of women's human rights, including among other aspects, access to information, participation in public spaces, and freedom of expression.

Women and girls have, in creative ways, explored and appropriated the power of the Internet to define their agenda and influence social norms and public policies. This active agency of women is an indicator of how the Internet is an exciting frontier of political activity for social change. It also suggests the need for public authorities to develop strong policy frameworks that strengthens the Internet as a public domain and uphold its architectural openness as non-negotiable to ensure equitable participation of the marginalised.

Public policies at national levels in all social and economic domains need to keep pace with the rapid changes being ushered in by the Internet and also pay heed to the inherent tensions arising in the Internet ecology - for instance between the right to privacy and the right to know - managing them not through retrograde, patronising and patriarchal visions of women's needs and rights, but with a strong commitment to human rights, equality and social justice. There is increasing evidence to show how private interests and state control can compromise the potential of the Internet to be an open and inclusive space.

The Gender Dynamic Coalition:

1. recognises the role of the state and private sector as key actors and request that they ensure accountability and the securing of privacy rights to create an enabling environment for the fulfillment of rights
2. considers that the IGF must move in the direction of helping national level legal and policy processes as well as regional bodies engaged in policy making, to frame issues and agenda in a manner that brings in gender justice not as an afterthought, but an essential ingredient of policy considerations
3. recommends the participation of women's rights groups in the deliberations and decision-making of the national, regional and the global IGF processes.
4. recommends that the IGF support and adopt a gender audit for planning sessions at the 7th IGF.

Considering all these, the Gender Dynamic Coalition supports the call to make human rights the theme of the IGF in 2012 and in doing so pay equal to attention to women's rights that emphasises a rights-based approach in place of protectionist solutions.