

## **The Role of ICT Policy in Empowering and Protecting the Rights of the Girl Child**

**Parallel event at the  
Fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women  
5 March 2007**

**Opening Statement by Ms. Carolyn Hannan, Director  
United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women**

Distinguished participants,  
Colleagues and Friends,

I am pleased to address this seminar on “The role of ICT policy in empowering and protecting the rights of the girl child”. The seminar, organized as a parallel event to the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), is part of UNITAR's Web Seminar Series on “ICT Policy Issues for Development”. I congratulate UNITAR for taking this initiative.

The Commission on the Status of Women continues its efforts to ensure a strong focus on national level implementation of its policy recommendations, including through the large number of opportunities provided during its sessions for interactive dialogue and exchange of experiences and lessons learned. In this context, the Commission encourages the organization of parallel events as a means to enrich its work. It particularly welcome those focused on the priority themes under consideration.

The priority theme for this session of the Commission is "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". The Commission will adopt new policy recommendations on this theme at the conclusion of the session. Under its new working methods, the Commission will also review implementation of these policy recommendations in 2-3 years time, to assess progress and identify continuing gaps and challenges. This provides an opportunity to ensure that critical issues related to girls and ICT are given attention in the policy recommendations adopted by the Commission and to monitor and report on progress when the Commission returns to the theme in 2-3 years time.

The Commission on the Status of Women has previously given attention to the issue of women and information and communication technology (ICT), most recently in 2003. The Commission called for increased access to and use of ICT by women and girls, provision of resources for ICT programmes and projects that promote gender equality, and measures to combat ICT and media based violence against women and girls. It recognized that if existing gender disparities in access to and use of ICT were identified and eliminated, ICT could be a powerful catalyst for the empowerment of women and girls and the promotion of gender equality.

The policy recommendations adopted by the Commission were forwarded to the World Summit on the Information Society WSIS I in Geneva in 2003 to ensure increased

attention to gender perspectives in the discussions and outcome of the summit. The Declaration of Principles, adopted at WSIS I, reaffirmed that ICT provided enormous opportunities and that women should be partners and key actors in the information society. The WSIS II in Tunis in

Despite the many successful initiatives undertaken at different levels, gaps remain with regard to girls' access and use of ICT. Fewer girls than boys access and use ICT, and girls continue to be underrepresented in