



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
12 December 2022

Original: English

---

## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

6–17 March 2023

Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**

### **Discussion guide for the ministerial round tables to be held under 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”**

Note by the Secretariat

## **I. Introduction**

1. In its resolution [2022/4](#) on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council decided that the session of the Commission would include a ministerial segment to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as their human rights, and to ensure high-level engagement and the visibility of the deliberations of the Commission, and that the segment would include ministerial round tables or other high-level interactive dialogues.

2. In accordance with the multi-year programme of work of the Commission, as contained in Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/15](#), the Commission will consider “Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls” as the priority theme for the sixty-seventh session, to be held from 6 to 17 March 2023. Further to that decision, it is proposed that the Commission hold ministerial round tables at that session to provide ministers with opportunities for high-level engagement on key issues arising under the priority theme.

---

\* [E/CN.6/2022/1](#).



## II. Organizational matters

### A. Theme and topics

3. Under the priority theme, the Commission will hold four ministerial round tables on the following two topics:

(a) Good practices in addressing barriers to bridge the gender digital divide and promote education in the digital age for achieving gender equality;

(b) Fostering inclusive innovation and technological change to empower women and girls and create safer digital spaces.

4. The ministerial round tables will be focused on the exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the proposed topics. Ministers will be invited to highlight the steps and measures that are necessary and planned to ensure that national responses effectively contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and the full enjoyment of their human rights, through the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### B. Participants

5. The round tables will provide ministers with the opportunity to engage in dialogue and discussion. They will be open to all Member States and observers.

6. Ministers are invited to indicate, in advance and preferably no later than 17 February 2023, the round table in which they would prefer to participate, as well as their second preference. Approximately 20 to 25 ministers are expected to participate in each round table. The Chairs of the ministerial round tables will have a list of ministers who have signed up for each round table, but no list of speakers will be prepared in advance.

7. The Chairs of the ministerial round tables will guide the discussion with a view to promoting interaction. Interventions are not to exceed three minutes, and emphasis will be placed on dialogue. Ministers will be encouraged to ask questions and comment on interventions made during the dialogue. Written statements are strongly discouraged.

### C. Times and locations

8. The round tables will be held at Headquarters, in New York, on Tuesday, 7 March 2023, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m., at the times and locations set out in the table below.

<i>Round table</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Location</i>
Good practices in addressing barriers to bridge the gender digital divide and promote education in the digital age for achieving gender equality	10–11.30 a.m.	Conference room 4
Fostering inclusive innovation and technological change to empower women and girls and create safer digital spaces	11.30 a.m.– 1 p.m.	Conference room 4

<i>Round table</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Location</i>
Good practices in addressing barriers to bridge the gender digital divide and promote education in the digital age for achieving gender equality	3–4.30 p.m.	Conference room 4
Fostering inclusive innovation and technological change to empower women and girls and create safer digital spaces	4.30–6 p.m.	Conference room 4

## D. Outcome

9. The outcomes of the round tables will be in the form of Chairs' summaries, prepared in consultation with the regional groups through the members of the Bureau.

## III. Items for discussion in the round tables

### A. Background

10. The discussion of the priority theme will provide the Commission with an opportunity to consider the topic in terms of how gender-responsive action across the relevant areas can accelerate the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda and the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development through holistic and integrated policies and programmes that uphold human rights, foster meaningful digital access and adequate digital skills, and build gender-responsive technology and effective safeguards that prevent the exacerbation of inequalities and discrimination.

11. During the round tables, ministers will be invited to consider the questions in the discussion guide below and to highlight recent policies, legislation, regulations, programmes and strategies that set priorities for and fund technological development in a way that advances gender equality and ensures that women and girls have equal opportunities for meaningful access to and use and design of technology, and equal opportunities to shape inclusive innovation ecosystems.

12. Ministers may also share recent experiences of cross-sectoral collaboration, especially whole-of-society and multi-stakeholder approaches that promote the education of girls and women in the digital age, improve the holistic measurement of the gendered impact of the digital transformation of economies and societies, and combat new risks, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, threats to the rights of women rights and bias in artificial intelligence. Ministers are encouraged to use the discussion guide and to consult the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme ([E/CN.6/2023/3](#)).

### B. Discussion guide

#### **Good practices in addressing barriers to bridge the gender digital divide and promote education in the digital age for achieving gender equality**

13. Access to digital technologies and skills for women and girls is restricted owing to a variety of factors, including lack of physical access to infrastructure or devices, affordability, education or digital skills, and social norms, which prevent women and girls from freely enjoying access to mobile phones or the Internet. In order to better understand the underlying issues preventing women and girls from equally benefiting

from technology and innovation, more sex-disaggregated data is needed to provide an intersectional lens through which to examine how different groups of women are affected, including women who are unemployed, women with low levels of literacy or income, women living in remote areas, women migrants, women with disabilities and older women over the age of 55.

14. Despite some progress over the past decade, the gender digital divide persists, with the number of men joining the Internet growing faster than that of women. In a context of increasing globalization, lack of access or insufficient skills to enter the digital world is a growing hurdle for women to gain access to digital services or for women-led small and medium-sized enterprises to gain access to new markets and greater profits. Evidence-based policy actions are needed to prevent the least connected countries, businesses and individuals from becoming increasingly marginalized in the digital economy and to prevent the emergence of new risks that women, their families and their businesses will be left behind.

15. The gender gap in digital skills can also exacerbate inequalities in the world of work. The future of work will be increasingly digitalized, marginalizing those who do not have the necessary skills to use or develop technology. Sustainable, just transitions have the potential to create millions of decent jobs, but women will not be able to benefit from them equally if current skills gaps and stereotypes go unaddressed. Women are highly underrepresented in emerging technological sectors; social norms influence girls to choose stereotypical career paths and male-dominated innovation ecosystems, driving women away from science and technology careers. Recruitment, retention and promotion of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers should be prioritized with a view to promoting women's access to fast-growing and well-paid careers and increasing their direct participation in the shaping of technologies.

16. Ministers are invited to consider the following questions to help to focus the dialogue:

(a) What steps are Governments taking to better measure and address the multidimensional barriers to women's and girls' meaningful access to and use of digital technologies, including affordability, digital literacy and skills, privacy and safety, content relevance, ownership, awareness, agency and social norms?

(b) What are examples of good practices in mainstreaming gender perspectives in national digital policies and programmes and setting gender-specific targets for each policy dimension?

(c) What investments are Governments making to ensure that women and girls are not left behind in the digital transformation, including in digital learning environments, teacher training, blended and hybrid education, digital skills, including digital citizenship skills, and computational thinking skills?

(d) What measures are Governments taking to shape more diverse and inclusive innovation ecosystems that help to reverse the underrepresentation of women in key emerging technological sectors and jobs created by the green economy and digital transformation?

#### **Fostering inclusive innovation and technological change to empower women and girls and create safer digital spaces**

17. Women are rarely viewed and empowered as creators, promoters and decision makers in the field of innovation and technology, which limits their ability to innovate and build technologies that respond to the needs and priorities of women and girls. Where design teams are not diverse, the usefulness of the technology that they design can be limited to certain segments of society, or the teams can fail to identify risks

and barriers for some categories of users. Technologists need to be formally trained on assessing potential uses and harm that can be associated with new technology products, especially in the areas of artificial intelligence and machine learning, which can perpetuate gender bias and thereby replicate gender profiling based on assumptions made on the basis of the data used to train such products.

18. The serious harm to and discrimination against women and girls triggered by new digital technologies have highlighted the need for ethical reflection and safeguards in an industry that remains largely unregulated and in which data ownership or content moderation rests in the hands of large corporations. As self-regulation has resulted in many companies ignoring or underinvesting in efforts to address the harm done by their products and services, there is a need for government involvement in regulatory reform to prevent data misuse and the use of technology for surveillance and to adopt a human-rights-based approach to technology design, development and deployment.

19. Women and girls are disproportionately targeted by technology-facilitated violence and suffer disproportionate consequences as a result. Their access to digital services and tools is often restricted, which aggravates the level of surveillance, trafficking or physical violence perpetrated against women, affects their work and learning opportunities, and deters their engagement in important online spaces and dialogues. The voices, agency and participation of women and girls as active digital citizens may thus be undermined, and technologies may be used to curb the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and freedom of expression, especially for women in the public eye.

20. Ministers are invited to consider the following questions to help to focus the dialogue:

(a) What are good practice examples of innovation and technology that respond to the needs of women and girls, are inclusive and accessible and provide gender-transformative approaches to help to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in the areas of education, agriculture, financial inclusion, climate change, humanitarian emergencies and health?

(b) What measures are Governments taking to address and track the gendered risks of emerging technologies, including risks associated with privacy and data protection, and to improve the transparency and accountability systems that ensure that necessary safeguards are in place to protect women and girls from discrimination?

(c) What are good practice examples of policies and measures taken to address the rise in instances of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including in terms of addressing limitations in legal frameworks, law enforcement implementation, institutional capacity and the provision of support for victims?

(d) What measures are Governments taking to protect the rights and agency of women and girls online, including specific groups of women who are often targeted by technology-facilitated gender-based violence?