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## Commission on the Status of Women

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to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly  
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and  
peace for the twenty-first century”

### **Statement submitted by DESSI International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### Women's Social and Economic Empowerment in the Digital Age

Female participation in social and economic life has increased because of the digital revolution, which is described by digital literacy skills for digital devices. If used properly, the internet is seen as a powerful tool for society in general and for women. It serves as their navigator, assistant, entertainer, and source of income. In at least three ways, digitalization provides opportunities for female empowerment and increases women's economic and social autonomy. It gives them social empowerment; with their digital literacy, they have expanded their social circle and social networking. They feel more confident and motivated to work on their own as a result. By using their abilities to handle several tasks at once, they also gain self-empowerment. They developed the self-assurance to make choices for their own lives and those of their loved ones. Additionally, they learn about problems through international forums. They participate in a variety of forums, including table talk, gossip, and recipe sharing, in addition to carrying out their domestic duties as a mother, wife, and daughter.

Women have been using their digital literacy in the modern period to better their lives and give themselves social and economic power despite various obstacles, such as financial limitations, learning opportunities, and cultural standards. However, more formal efforts are needed to raise the level of competence among our women in the digital age; this will also assist close the gender digital divide.

Nearly half of Pakistan's population is made up of women, who are seen as being crucial to the process of change. Women who have access to digital and technical education, have the opportunity and understanding to actively participate in the decision-making process. However, women have fewer opportunities to receive technical training in impoverished nations like Pakistan. Whereas all countries similarly have embraced digital technology to keep up with innovation and get ready for the socioeconomic environment's constant change. However, most low-income countries, like Pakistan, still deny women access to digital technologies, which limits their ability to rise in society.

In reality, women have less education than males, and with the strong educational foundations, digital literacy abilities could emerge. Opportunities for such engagement have been shown to have a favourable impact on participants' lives in terms of their adoption of digital technology to enhance their overall quality of life as well as their economic well-being. Despite the significant benefits that digitalization has brought us, not everyone in society is equally able to take use of these benefits. According to recent data from the International Telecommunications Union, there are typically 12% fewer girls than males who can access mobile devices and laptops with internet access. In fact, the gender gap has widened in recent years. Women and girls are perceived as being at the bottom of the economic pyramid because of their limited usage of digital systems. "This gender disparity is pervasive throughout the entire ICT ecosystem." Because women are underrepresented among internet users, they have lower levels of digital literacy than men.

Global leaders have committed to empowering women, including by utilizing ICT's potential as part of the sustainable development goals. By 2030, the percentage of young people and adults with digital skills—including technical and vocational skills—that are necessary for employment, decent employment, and entrepreneurship will have significantly increased. Digital technology, and in particular mobile devices with internet connection, have helped women in their efforts to overcome the traditional and cultural restrictions placed on their mobility outside of home zones.

Girls can have access to the entire world and are connected to one another so effortlessly thanks to the internet. Because they can connect and interact at any time and from anywhere, managing social relationships and events through social networking is crucial for women. Contacting loved ones from anywhere in the world has gotten a lot simpler.

Women now have easier access to the internet market and the chance to work from home with lower start-up costs thanks to digital spaces. They have access to venues where they can express their creativity and engage with customers, and they can also receive training and offer mentoring. The use of the internet and mobile devices is growing every day. Due to their limited mobility or the difficulty of making contacts with customers in the real world in historically gender-segregated countries, women were not previously considered as engaged in economic development. Women now have access to small business prospects and opportunities for savings because of digital literacy.

Education in the digital age is hampered by numerous issues. A woman must take care of her children, cook, support her parents, look after her in-laws, and do other household chores as a woman. Due to these obligations, individuals struggle to find free time to learn new skills or even to hone existing traditional education-based digital skills. Problems allocating time and money are among the other difficulties mentioned in this study. The main obstacles women encounter in learning digital skills in this era of digital literacy are listed below after the investigation. Girls begin using digital technology later than males do, and their usage of it is more frequently restricted by their parents. A disproportionate number of young women and girls are exposed to online and ICT-facilitated violence and harassment, which can have a harmful effect on their physical, mental, and emotional well-being as well as how they access and use digital resources for the rest of their lives. Every girl has the right to be secure, connected, and involved in creating a future that is more egalitarian, environmentally friendly, and technologically improved. Women mostly rely on their relatives and friends, who may not be knowledgeable professionals but are still better than their skills, to maintain their digital literacy. Troubleshooting, updating, privacy concerns, and new apps are the main areas where they need assistance with setting up their smartphones. Usually, their ability to impart knowledge has not been valued. Due to ongoing cyberbullying, threats, and access issues brought on by the digital divide, we should continue to collaborate to prevent and stop gender-based violence online. Better access to digital technology must be ensured, especially for rural women and girls. All over the world, girls and young women want to join the digital revolution. When we remove barriers of access and safety, women and girls can make remarkable contributions to, and be empowered by, ICTs.

The difference in online presence between men and women indicates that Pakistan's route to advancement is difficult given that women make up nearly half of the population. Nowadays, most social and business sectors have either gone completely online or have just partially shifted to digital forms of operation and communication. If women are not immediately given access to digital technologies and training, the nation's economic development would lag. To better prepare future generations with the necessary knowledge and skills, digitalization should be introduced into curricula along with increasing girls' access to reading. Many female graduates from Pakistan struggle to obtain work because their education and training are outdated. Many girls lack access to digital gadgets and the internet or ignorant of freelance opportunities.

Numerous potentials for female freedom and more equitable female involvement in the labour, financial, and entrepreneurial sectors are presented by digitalization. The current state of digitization appears to favour female workers, who are less likely than male workers to be replaced by machines. In the digital age,

women's frequently greater social abilities constitute a competitive advantage, especially when those social skills are combined with higher education and advanced digital literacy.

- Promoting female digital literacy
  - Free digital trainings with entrepreneurship support
  - Enabling universal open internet access
  - Encourage more women to pursue higher education and education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
  - Encourage and give preference women leadership
  - Increase female quota
  - Redesign government initiatives and digital inclusion of women
  - Provide free and easy virtual platforms particularly to rural women
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