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Statement submitted by Hellenic Association of Political Scientists, and Kallipatira, non-governmental organizations 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

During the last few years, technology has undoubtedly dominated both in the workplace and daily life creating driving forces that lead to a new digital era. This era has been significantly revolutionary and has transformed the nature and the function of a huge variety of fields. In fact, technology constitutes a structural component of our lives that is continuously evolving, resulting in a specifically demanding environment for humanity. This actually means that humans have to keep up with this constantly driving change and be developed at the same range that information technology does.

Although technology and innovation are considered to be important accomplishments of humanity during the last century, a closer look could prove that digitalisation is not being represented equally by both female and male actors in all parts of the world. This stands for either the lack of necessary knowledge and skills due to women's technological illiteracy or women's underrepresentation in the digital industry. Over time, although major gender differences in the technological field have been noticed, it is an undeniable fact that women have contributed to a huge degree in digital and innovative accomplishments.

However, current explicit and implicit gender prejudices along with the limited participation of women in technological services tend to increase the gap between men's and women's impact on the field. In fact, gender inequality is evident through all the cases that are related to digital use such as internet access and access to digital devices, information about new technologies, digital skills and participation in digital-related work positions. Moreover, women seem to be sidelined and their work remains invisible and unrecognized, no matter the importance of their contribution in technological innovation. The sanitary crisis that emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic, gave prominence and made even more imperative the need for the ownership of digital technologies and the ability to use them as working tools. Unfortunately, both digital access and literacy are not considered vested for a lot of women around the world due to their marginalization related to their age, race, income or disability.

Under this context, The Hellenic Association of Political Scientists and KALLIPATIRA applaud and are willing to further support UN Women's innovation strategy in order to encourage policies that aim to enhance and empower women's position in the digital and technological field. Our claim is that advancements in digital transformation can and should go hand in hand with gender equality advancements. We recognize that the potential of women's capabilities and contributions to technological services is significantly high and that is why it is firstly necessary to redefine the current international landscape concerning today's political, economic and social circumstances in each member state. Realistically, this means that states should address in a way efficient and equivalent, their current needs, forming detailed and effective national strategies in order to promote women's technological empowerment.

For example, considering that the case is different for developed and developing states, emphasis should be put on encouraging greater women's recruiting in digital industry and providing the necessary skills and technological education, respectively. The aforementioned may demand the establishment of the necessary legislation that could enhance the professional upgrowth of women in technological services, such as relevant recruitment and retention targets for companies or training programs that could provide women with the necessary digital skills and tools. In this context, UN Women's HeForShe IMPACT 10x10x10 initiative could be further expanded in order

to involve and encourage more governments and corporations towards the direction of promoting commitments in favor of the technological advancement of women.

Technological illiteracy is even more evident if we take into consideration the current challenge of automation that states have to cope with. It is claimed that automation tends to affect mostly women since the replaceable professions involve low or middle skill routine tasks usually occupied by women (like clerks, secretaries and service workers). This leads to the need of establishing social protection systems that will be able to protect and mainly provide mechanisms that can ensure the provision of required skills to adapt to new types of professions. In this case states and corporations have to ensure that women are provided with the essential opportunities to participate in those mechanisms and are not excluded.

Moreover, The Hellenic Association of Political Scientists and KALLIPATIRA strongly believe that cooperation among states and UN Women should continue to function towards a collective and efficient policy decision making. This means that common guidelines that could form a collective framework promoting principles and methods related to technology and innovation would be highly helpful for all member states. More specifically the aforesaid framework could involve guidelines correlated to digital literacy, disinformation limitation, artificial intelligence learning resources, mentoring and training programs, finance access and corporations and NGOs that could engage in national and local initiatives.

Towards a parallel direction, enhancing cooperation with NGOs can also be specifically constructive and useful so as to foster gender equality and empowerment in the technological services. Their contribution is primarily evident in underdeveloped states where NGOs in close cooperation with UN's guidelines can be supportive to governmental policies and improve women's position in the technological field. UN Women's initiatives, such as the "Buy from Women Enterprise Platform" in Rwanda and "The African Girls Can Code Initiative", can be further expanded if local NGOs get involved, support and integrate more countries and local communities to those policies.

In general, women's inclusion in technology and innovation constitutes a factor that needs to be addressed by the whole international community in a way that can enhance their access, skills and professional development in the digital industry. UN Women, NGOs and states should invest in cooperation and collective decision making in order to extend the existing initiatives, but also to create new ones. This means that there is an imperative need of promoting and encouraging female entrepreneurship along with providing the necessary skills and knowledge to create the necessary driving forces that could lead to a constant development of women in technology services. The fundamental pillars have been established and in order to be extended they have to constitute the motive for further improvement.

The Hellenic Association of Political Scientists and the Panhellenic Women's Sport Association KALLIPATIRA are grateful for having had the opportunity to express their views on the topic of the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women.