

Statement by
Trilateral (Austria, Croatia and Slovenia)
at the
38th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Annual full –day discussion on the human rights of women
II Panel

Geneva, 22 June 2018

Mr. President,

I have the honour to read this statement on behalf of Austria, Croatia and my own country Slovenia. We welcome this panel discussion and thank the panelists for their important contributions.

Our group remains concerned over estimations that there are approximately 250 million fewer women than men online worldwide. Especially worrying is the trend of expansion of the gender digital divide and is highest occurrence in least developed countries. It is important to mention also that barriers experienced by women when accessing ICT's are very often intensified with other offline inequalities. Thus we feel it is important to adopt a systematic and human rights based approach to address these issues, including through addressing women's rights that are affected by ICT's.

Moreover, as also written in the report on gender digital divide, the Sustainable Development Goals are an important tool for reinforcing the existing human rights obligations of States to bridge the gender digital divide. We can achieve this through universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020 (SDG9), as well as equal access for women and men to basic services, including new technology, by 2030 (SDG 1.4).

We would like to especially mention the importance of SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. By achieving it, we will be bringing women and girls closer to digital and online spaces. At the same time if they are already enjoying access to those spaces they will be able to additionally educate themselves and make SDG4 a reality faster.

We would like to inquire where the distinguished panel sees the possibilities to promote these challenges further and how could we make the importance of *narrowing the gender digital divide* more visible?

Thank you!