

DIGITAL SKILLS FOR LIFE: building the talent pipeline of girls and women to benefit the digital economy

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Side-event at CSW67

DATE: 9 MARCH

TIME: 8 :15 AM TO 9 :30 AM

LOCATION: CONFERENCE ROOM B

Session Objective

Digital technologies are shaping today's society, in which 90% of future jobs will require digital skills. However, women are still being left behind: women are 16% less likely than men to use mobile internet across low- and middle-income countries, and less than 20% of tech jobs are currently held by women. In such a fast-paced changing environment, we need to ensure equal opportunities for learning and developing digital skills so women and girls can partake equally in the technological reality.

Empowering women and girls to access the internet and obtain the necessary basic and advanced digital skills opens professional opportunities but also allows them to explore new educational opportunities, access healthcare, obtain critical information and take advantage of digital financial services.

The EQUALS Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age or EQUALS, which consists of more than 100 partners from across the public and private sector, is working to ensure that everyone, everywhere, benefits equally from the power of digital technologies. As such projects and initiatives to bridge the digital gender divide sit at the core of its mission and the work of partners. Some of its most prominent projects which showcase the power of public private partnerships to advance digital gender inclusions include the [EQUALS Her Digital Skills initiative](#) co-founded by GSMA, ITU, W4 and EY which aims to deliver gender transformative digital skills training and mentoring opportunities to 1 million girls and young women by 2026.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), as a co-founder of EQUALS, launched the [Girls in ICT Day](#) initiative more than ten years ago, with this year's theme on *Digital Skills for Life*, as to inspire and equip girls with the skills they need to follow their dream STEM careers. Moreover, ITU's flagship initiative on youth, [Generation Connect](#), aims to engage global youth and encourage their participation as equal partners alongside the leaders of today's digital change, empowering young people with the skills and opportunities to advance their vision of a connected future.

This panel session will examine the root causes of the digital skills gap and will also propose concrete actions, drawing on the above-mentioned efforts, that stakeholders can undertake and implement to make sure girls and women are equipped with the necessary digital skills for life and becoming both ICT users and creators in the digital world and STEM fields.

Session Structure

Moderator

Ellen Taylor, Generation Connect Youth Envoy

1. Welcome and Opening remarks (8')

H.E.Mr. Richard Arbeiter, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations in NY

Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General, ITU

2. Keynote (8')

HRH Princess Beatrice of York

3. Panellists highlight current challenges in bridging the gender digital skills gap and the concrete actions to make sure girls and women can benefit of the digital economy (40')

- Mats Granryd, Director General, GSMA
- Annette Ssemuwemba, Deputy Executive Director, EIF
- Karla Velasco, Policy Advocacy Coordinator – APC
- Judith Fessehaie, Head Women and Trade Programme, ITC
- Representative from Bulgaria
- Representative from Australia

4. Testimonials (fireside chat) on the power of digital skills solutions and platforms for the empowerment of girls and women in the digital world (10')

Emma Randall – Generation Connect Youth Envoy

Melissa El Feghali – Generation Connect Gender Champion

5. Q&A (5')

6. Concluding remarks (5')

Dr Cosmas Zavazava, Director of the Telecommunications Development Bureau, ITU

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