

Gender inclusion and the future of the Internet

Messages

- There was strong recognition on the significance of the first main session on gender at the IGF, and its importance in addressing this as an integral and cross-cutting issue. Gender should be understood through the lens of intersectionality, which integrates diversity, including on rural/urban locations, economic power, and sexual orientation and gender identities, and that special attention should be given to gender-related issues of subgroups (e.g. rural women, girls, women in refugee camps, LGBTQI).
- There was general support that gender digital divide is still a reality manifesting itself in multiple dimensions. Efforts to enable women and girls to access the infrastructures and digital technologies need to be complemented with creating digital literacy, enabling meaningful use of technologies, encouraging them to prepare for jobs in technology fields, enabling them to create content that is relevant and valuable to their lives and contexts, as well as empowering them to contribute to Internet governance and digital policy processes. Some pointed out that gender equality is also a matter of culture and norms, and that stereotypes should be fought against through education and awareness. Context was stressed as an important factor that impacts on this issue.
- The digital divide facilitates discrimination of women and girls and as such, is a human rights issue that states should address in line with international human rights frameworks. Cooperation is key, and also other stakeholders have critical roles to play.
- Several discussants stated that technology is not neutral, and that gender diversity should be taken into account when technologies are designed. They warned for the potential impact of data-driven technologies on gender digital rights, and called for multistakeholder action to avoid that opaque algorithms and machine learning systems make gender-biased decisions.
- The issue of online gender-based abuse and violence was highlighted as a continued challenge to be addressed. Some warned that states and Internet intermediaries, when tackling online gender-based abuse and violence should not do so through a protectionist framework, but through the framework of human rights. This includes the need to potentially balance different rights, and that the principles of necessity, proportionality, and transparency should be respected in so far as they limit the freedom of expression.
- The important role played by civil society actors in developing research and coordinating collaboration to understand key and emerging gender-related issues were acknowledged, and policymakers were encouraged to engage and be part of honest conversations to develop not only policies but coordinated plans together to achieve concrete results. Many acknowledged the progress made in recent years to integrate women rights and the gender issues into Internet governance processes, mechanisms, and structures (including the IGF). Yet, it was felt that gender equality and inclusion should remain a priority area. A multistakeholder approach was underlined as an important model and approach in this.

