



Arab Statement

Issued by the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 67th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67)

On

“Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls”.

Under the umbrella of the League of Arab States, and chaired by the Republic of Iraq, President of the 42nd session of the Committee on Arab Women, we, the women ministers, and ministers and representatives of national mechanisms concerned with women's affairs in the member States of the League of Arab States, participating in the Arab preparatory meeting for the 67th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, have met on Monday, February 6, 2023, on the digital platform, with the objective of coordinating and agreeing on the unified Arab regional position towards the issues that will be discussed during the work of the 67th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women on the priority theme “Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls”.

Recognizing the significant economic gains the Arab region has achieved and will achieve through investment in technologies in the digital age as a key factor for progress in the field of sustainable development and the opportunity to achieve growth in the GDP of countries, we emphasize the opportunities offered by technologies to improve the social and economic status of women by promoting positive social values, behaviours and concepts and changing negative stereotypes towards women, thus contributing to enhancing social justice, peace and prosperity in the Arab region;

Recognizing also that the unjust colonial policies and procedures and discriminatory legislation of the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine would deprive women and girls of the educational and innovation opportunities offered by technology in the digital age, hindering their empowerment and the achievement of gender equality;

While commending on the exceptional digital achievements made by a number of countries in the Arab region, where the global percentage of households with access to the internet has exceeded with an average penetration rate of 58.9 %, with the GCC countries taking the lead, we also take into account the great disparity between Arab countries in the provision of necessary infrastructure for providing the internet service¹, especially in countries suffering from crises and armed conflicts, where in a number of Member States the percentage has decreased about 10% lower than the global average;

Proud that women in the Arab region account for 34-57% ² of STEM college graduates – a higher figure than in Europe and the USA, providing an important opportunity to increase the proportion of women in technical jobs, as, through digitalization, the share of women in technical jobs is expected to increase by more than double by 2030;

Noting that the existing digital gender gap in the rate of internet use in some countries of the Arab region, which reaches 56 % for women and 68%³ for men, constitutes an obstacle for women’s economic and social empowerment during the digital transition;

Being aware also of the relevant challenges related to technology, especially the emerging issue of cyber violence against women and girls, which largely targets women working in the public sphere;

Recalling the Ministerial Declaration on “Gender Equity and Parity for Development and Environmental Sustainability”, Arab Women’s Development Agenda (2023-2028), which emphasises on renewing the commitment to women’s economic empowerment, and stresses the importance of working on digital literacy for women and girls, especially women and girls in refugee and displacement situations, and the need to promote equal access for women and girls to information and communication technology, the internet and digital technology to ensure equality in employment opportunities in the technology and innovation sector, promoting digital economic participation, ensuring sustainable financial income for women and girls and advocating for the implementation of regional and national programmes to build the capacities of women and girls in the field of vocational training and diversified economic entrepreneurship, particularly in the field of technology in the green and blue economies;

¹ Digital Trends in the Arab States region, 2021, ITU/WTDC

² <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs55-women-in-science-2019-en.pdf>

³ [Facts and figures 2021 \(itu.int\)](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/factsheets.aspx)

Referring to the agreed conclusions of the 55th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which called on stakeholders to ensure full participation of women and girls in the digital age and their access to innovative technologies through a participatory and multisectoral approach; and

Within the framework of defining a unified Arab position in international fora and for preparing for the current session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67), and in light of the development gains available to the Arab region through investment in technology, we do hereby agree on the importance of working together to reduce the digital divide between women and men, taking into account the specificity of plans, budgets and orientations for each country through the following areas:

1- Promoting women's economic empowerment in the context of innovation, new technologies and digital development through:

- 1-1 Strengthening regional cooperation to support the regional initiative on women's economic empowerment in the green and blue economies which requires the use of digital technologies, in following up on the first paragraph of the Arab Declaration of the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.
- 1-2 Taking the necessary steps for providing more education opportunities in science and innovation and improving employment opportunities for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics as they are the fields of the future, specifically in the field of smart climate agriculture, and building partnerships with actors in the public and private sectors, civil society institutions and international bodies working in these fields.
- 1-3 Improving women's access to financial inclusion services, inclusion in financial inclusion policies and strategies and the establishment of financing mechanisms for women.
- 1-4 Participating in supporting the comprehensive regional program for economic and social empowerment, which aims to improve the economic and social conditions of women in the Arab region, women in refugee and displacement situations, women with disabilities and women under Israeli occupation, including investing in literacy in general and digital literacy in particular for women and girls, and empowering innovative girls through dedicated educational programmes that encourage innovation and scientific research.
- 1-5 Taking the necessary measures to ensure that electronic content is accessible to women with visual impairments enabling them to have easy access to technological innovation.
- 1-6 Taking the necessary measures to exploit alternative energy, support productive women's associations and harness technology in the production, packaging and marketing process.

2- Enhancing women's access to decision-making and leadership positions in the digital age:

- 2-1 Continuing the work towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Arab Statement of the 64th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of

Women (CSW64) on increasing the participation of women in public office, especially in environment, agriculture and digital technology.

- 2-2 Promoting access to affordable technologies that enable women to communicate in a safe environment, and support their participation in public digital spaces, especially the most vulnerable women such as women in remote, marginalized and rural areas, women with disabilities and women in refugee and displacement situations.
- 2-3 Eliminating stereotypes that hinder women's participation and access to leadership positions in public service through the use of digital technology in the fields of education media and culture, and supporting the delivery of successful gender leadership models in local communities.

3- Ensuring social protection and food security for women and girls in the digital age within the context of innovation and technology:

- 3-1 Supporting the development of new technologies and innovations in the field of food security to provide humanitarian services as a tool to empowering women and maintaining their independence, especially their dignity, in situations of humanitarian crises.
- 3-2 Taking measures to ensure that digital technologies used to provide humanitarian assistance respond to the needs of women and girls, and that technology is accessible to women with disabilities and to ensure that women's access to digital health services, including reproductive health services, is increased.
- 3-3 Ensuring that technology tools are leveraged to enhance women's access to information on social protection programmes, and build women's capacity to use and subscribe in such programmes and enhancing women's access to information on their legal rights.
- 3-4 Taking the necessary measures to bridge the digital divide between men and women especially in rural areas and places of refuge and displacement, and for the benefit of women most in need.
- 3-5 Provide protection to Palestinian women in light of the escalation of violence directed at them by the occupying Power.

4- Achieving peace and security in the context of innovation and technological change:

- 4-1 Taking advantage of the opportunities offered by technology and digital solutions used in peace and security to support the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in peace and security and their participation in public life.
- 4-2 Ensuring that women's participation in negotiation and peacebuilding processes is enhanced when using cyberspace.
- 4-3 Supporting refugee-hosting countries by providing digital infrastructure for refugee communities.
- 4-4 Harnessing technology by establishing early warning stations and monitoring violations suffered by women during periods of asylum, displacement or occupation.

4-5 Supporting Palestinian women in international fora to hold the occupation accountable for its crimes through innovative technological means.

5- Protecting women and girls from all forms of violence in the context of innovation and technological change:

5-1 Production, collection and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex and age to facilitate the monitoring of forms of violence arising from the use of the internet and technology of various types (psychological - social - physical - material).

5-2 Strengthening work with security agencies and police to prevent online sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse, and provide a comprehensive response services for battered women to address online violence.

5-3 Strengthening and developing legal and legislative frameworks and awareness programmes to address online harassment and support applicable laws through comprehensive cost-defined plans and effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms and ensuring the availability of the necessary financial resources for their implementation and that they are accessible to women and girls with disabilities.

5-4 Strengthening regional and international cooperation to develop mechanisms to address violence against women resulting from the negative use of technology.

5-5 Ensuring the inclusion of legal provisions that will fill the gaps to address violence against women and girls in the digital space, and establishing regulations for technology companies to support the immediate removal of any offensive content.

5-6 Working on programmes to "raise the efficiency" of girls and women on following best practices and safe use of the internet.

6- Adapting to Climate Change and Environmental Disasters in the Digital Age:

6-1 Taking measures to produce, collect and make available data disaggregated by sex, age, economic status, and disability to monitor the various impacts of climate change on women and girls, including women in refugee situations, women with disabilities and women in remote and marginalized areas.

6-2 Building the capacity of women, especially rural women, to use digital technologies for climate-smart agricultural adaptation to climate change to mitigate its impacts in order to enhance their resilience to climate change and achieve economic resilience.

6-3 Taking necessary measures to ensure and improve women's access, especially rural women, to reliable and secure markets through digital platforms to facilitate e-commerce services.

6-4 Developing the capacity of government actors in the field of gender equality to: (a) enhance understanding of the linkages between women's issues, climate change and the issue of migration, and (b) mainstream the principles of equal opportunity and women's empowerment in the design and implementation of national climate strategies and frameworks, with a particular focus on priorities of the most affected women.

- 6-5 Building a cadre of women leaders and ensuring that women are fully and equally involved in decision-making mechanisms related to climate issues and are involved in their management in the context of the digital age.
- 6-6 Taking necessary measures to ensure that electronic content related to climate and disasters is available to all women with disabilities, especially women with visual impairments.
- 6-7 Affirming of the General Assembly Resolution No. 64/185 on the permanent control of the Palestinian people over their natural resources.