

June 2021

Submission to the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression

In addition to what will be sent as part of a joint NGO submission on women rights defenders, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) would like to share with the Special Rapporteur the following two publications that are relevant to her project on **"Gender Justice and the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression"** in particular the questions relating to ICT-violence and online safety. As part of developing these publications, WILPF collected some additional research that did not get included therein. We could discuss those findings with the Rapporteur and her team, should that be of interest.

- A **report** co-authored with by WILPF and the Association for Progressive Communications looking at **"Why and how gender matters in international cyber peace and security."**

The report identifies multiple gender-differentiated impacts of cyber operations with an international dimension, such as internet shutdowns, data breaches, and disinformation campaigns, and builds the case that these differentiated impacts need to be better accounted for and understood by policy-making and technical communities. The report provides numerous examples of how rights to privacy and freedom of expression are hindered by technology-facilitated violence through the three types of operations described above and how such violence—particularly disinformation campaigns—undermine women's participation in public life.

In addition to outlining the gendered impacts of cyber operations, the report explores the digital gender gap that exists within cyber diplomacy and policy professions. In order to improve gender diversity and women's meaningful participation, it advocates for solutions that also address problematic underlying gender norms and stereotypes. It also provides some examples of relevant multilateral frameworks, and good practice.

Report published in April 2020, available at:

<https://reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/publications-and-research/publications/14677-why-gender-matters-in-international-cyber-security>

- **A Policy Brief for Action Coalition 5: Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality**

The brief explores the Interlinkages between the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and the work of the Generation Equality Action Coalitions and the Compact for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action.

Despite being heralded for their potential to achieve gender equality, technology and innovation have introduced new dangers for women and people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics. The gender dimensions of technology are rooted in a wider context of how societies approach, use, and develop digital technology. This also means that technology is not neutral; rather, it reflects, enhances, and embodies many of the same characteristics and qualities of the offline world.

In his 2018 address to the UN General Assembly, UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted that “the technological revolution is being used to discriminate against women and reinforce our male-dominated culture.” Furthermore, whether done intentionally or not, many innovations are designed with the embedded gender and other biases of their creators, and the intersecting structural inequalities of the offline world mean that even the most helpful technologies remain inaccessible to those who would benefit the most from them, including women, girls, and socioeconomically marginalised populations. Technologies can be helpful accelerators for change, but can also be weaponised to perpetrate gendered violence and warfare.

A feminist approach, with its emphasis on structural transformation, inclusivity, human rights and human security, is critical to addressing the gender-related challenges wrought by technology and innovation in order to promote gender equality within, and through, them.

The policy brief provides seven priority actions that a range of actors should take.

Policy brief published in February 2021, available at: <https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Action-Coalitions-and-WPS-Policy-Brief-5.pdf>