DC-Gender contribution to the IGF 2021 issue areas

1. About DC-Gender

The Dynamic Coalition on Gender and Internet Governance (DC-Gender) seeks to ensure and improve gender equality and inclusion within the Internet governance spaces and dialogues. Among others, the DC wants to promote women and other marginalized genders' visibility at the IGF and related fora; to conduct research and input on the main topics of IGF debates; to support capacity building of gender advocates and to promote more effective linkages between local, regional and global initiatives on gender and information society.

The Preamble of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development says, "As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind." This is also reiterated in the 2019 Sustainable Development Goals Report, drawing attention to policy choices in particular and the need for diligence in ensuring that no one is indeed left behind. Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) aims to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." The realisation of this Goal is not possible without expanding the purview of "gender", and truly including all women and girls, including women of non-normative sexualities, trans women, and queer and non-binary persons.

2. Relevant issue area(s) and policy (questions)

The issue area relevant to the DC's work is 'Economic and social inclusion and human rights: Social inequality and the pandemic'. And we primarily seek to address the following policy questions:

- What can be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic context about the relationship between digital inequality and social and economic inequality?

- Similarly, what lessons can be drawn with respect to the pandemic and Internet-related human rights? What does this suggest about policy approaches for digitalisation and digital inclusion?

3. DC contribution

The inclusion of a gendered perspective in internet governance, both in policies and implementation, while taking into account the changing digital landscapes, needs and realities during COVID, will contribute to more women and other marginalized genders freely and safely inhabiting online spaces, and help create an equal, inclusive, and diverse internet governance space. According to the GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report 2020, 54 per cent of women in low- and middle-income countries now use mobile internet and the gender gap is narrowing. Despite this progress, without access to the mobile Internet, women, trans and non-binary persons, specially in low-income communities and contexts, face multiple access threats, exacerbated during COVID: not having access to food, healthcare, state subsidies, education, critical information, employment, counselling, helplines and freedom from violence. Even though

affordability is a key source of exclusion, there are also significant socio-cultural norms that restrict access and use for women and other marginalised genders.

The DC-Gender session will be strongly intertwined with a question that is integral to IGF 2021: How can we understand and address the links between digital inequality and social and economic inequality in the context of the COVID pandemic to strengthen gender-equal, rights-affirming digital policies and internet governance? We will explore social inequalities in the context of COVID through the lens and lived experiences of gender, surfacing gender inequality as a key driver that results in digital inequality and vice versa. Through country-specific examples, civil society speakers from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America will delve into multiple aspects of this issue: from privacy and increased surveillance due to contact tracing apps, online education and gender, how digital tools mainstreamed gender, and the ongoing shadow pandemic of online violence. With multifold issues around access to the internet for women and other marginalized genders, we think that it is essential to discuss meaningful access to the internet, while also reflecting on more intersecting issues related to internet and gender rights such as issues of privacy, surveillance and online violence.