

Oral Statement for CSW65: Creating Safe Spaces for Women and Girls Online

Women are the main targets of cyberviolence and online hate speech. In particular at risk are women politicians, journalists, academics and human rights defenders. Cyberviolence denies women's and girls' political, civil and human rights; deprives them of freedom of assembly, association and expression; and impacts their physical and mental health, dignity, equality, and social and financial development.

Women's voices and full participation as digital citizens are censored by online harassment and violence, with costly social and economic implications. In the COVID era, as people around the world spend more time online, we see increased cyberviolence and harassment in the shadow pandemic of gender-based violence.

The HRC Resolution on human rights on the internet affirms that rights people have off-line must be protected online; extends the concept of violence against women in public life to virtual public spaces; and condemns gender-based violence on the Internet. ILO Convention 190 calls for the adoption of laws to prevent gender-based violence and harassment enabled by information and communication technologies. SDG #5 includes a target to enhance the use of information and communications technology to promote the empowerment of women.

We therefore call upon UN Member States to:

Ratify and implement ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work;

Ensure legislation preventing abuse and exploitation of women and girls by criminal use of technology and cyberviolence;

Set standards on online violence against women and hold social media platforms accountable for removal of abusive, sexist and misogynist content;

Invest in education and training to enhance women and girls' ability to use the internet safely;

Provide safety advice, resources and reporting procedures for online violence against women and girls, and helplines to support women and girls who experience online harassment and violence;

Support with public funds and respect women's organisations that raise awareness for good practices for safe and inclusive ICTs and help victims of cybercrime;

Support the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative to combat online abuses that threaten civil liberties;

Implement post-pandemic recovery strategies respecting human rights, achieving the SDGs and creating a future of equal opportunities for women and men.