

## **Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on the Sixty-Seventh Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67)**

**Priority theme: Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls**

**8 February 2023 from 9.30 – 16.00 Hours**

**9 February 2023 from 9.30– 16.30 Hours  
(both days, Thailand Standard Time)**

**ESCAP Conference Room 3, Bangkok, Thailand**

### **Concept Note**

#### **1. Introduction**

The sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) will take place from 6 to 17 March 2023 and bring together representatives of member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations from across the world to discuss the priority theme: *Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*.<sup>1</sup>

The priority theme focuses on the impacts of the evolving digital landscape, and related innovations, technological advances, and transformations in the education sector. Digital innovation has the potential to be a critical ‘driver of change’ for gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE), by expanding access to information, knowledge, essential public services, and opportunities for full participation in socio-economic life. However, the benefits of technological innovation do not necessarily add up to gender transformative outcomes.<sup>2</sup> While the digital revolution has immense potential to improve social and economic outcomes for all women and girls, it also poses the risk of perpetuating already existing patterns of discrimination and gender inequalities. The CSW67 priority theme, therefore, provides a unique opportunity to revisit the gendered impacts of innovation and technology and to identify recommendations that will allow for a more inclusive and equitable digital evolution.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation will be jointly convened by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in collaboration with the following regional UN entities: the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations

---

<sup>1</sup> The CSW 67 will also discuss the Review theme: *Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls (Agreed Conclusions of the sixty-second session (CSW 62))*.

<sup>2</sup> EGM paper- Innovation to tackle gender inequality – a back-to-basics roadmap. Anita Gurumurthy and Nandini Chami, IT for Change

Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

## 2. Objectives and outcome

The objective of the regional consultation is to provide an interactive forum for ESCAP member States and key stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific to examine ways to accelerate progress on key frameworks including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (in particular the 2019 Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The consultation will provide an opportunity for both state and non-state actors to take stock of key trends, needs, gaps in policy responses, and good practices, as well as to consider possible areas for joint interventions (policy, programmatic or otherwise), to address innovation, technological change, and education in the digital age, towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Specifically, this regional consultation will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas among state and non-state actors in order to:

- Foster better understanding of the obstacles preventing women and girls from sharing in the benefits of digital transformation and innovation, on an equal footing with men and boys. These obstacles include barriers to connectivity (access to the Internet, and the affordability of digital tools and technologies), the role of gender norms in limiting women's and girls' access to and effective participation in STEM education and careers
- Consider how to create and promote gender-transformative digital technology and innovation ecosystems, which actively respond to the needs of women and girls, and ensure that we leave no one behind, looking at the future of work, the digital economy and society. This includes digital technologies to support and advance individual social and economic development and rights, including innovations tailored to meet the needs of diverse women and girls (including women and girls with disabilities; in hard-to-reach communities and/or crises-affected contexts) etc.
- Enhance collaboration to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are mainstreamed across digital strategies, policies, programs and related investments in all developmental spheres, and additionally to promote research and data science to inform these policies (and social and economic policies, more broadly), and the development of digital tools, capacities and services, to ensure that no one is left behind in the process of digital transformation.
- Develop comprehensive frameworks for addressing online and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination, in order to effectively safeguard the rights of women and girls (i.e. their leadership, participation and agency) in digital spaces.

The outcome of the Asia-Pacific regional consultation for CSW67 will be a set of recommendations on areas for accelerated action, in line with the Priority Theme for CSW67. The recommendations will feed into CSW67 and can inform membership contributions to the Agreed Conclusions.

### 3. Participants

This regional consultation will bring together ESCAP member States, representatives from civil society (representing women and girls from diverse sectors of society), members of academia and/or think tanks, inter-governmental organizations, UN entities, private sector, international financial institutions and others.

### 4. Modality/structure of event

The regional consultation will be convened in a hybrid format i.e. in-person at the ESCAP premises (Conference Room 3) with the option for online participation via the Zoom platform. It will take place on 8 February 2023 from 9.30–16.00 Hours and 9 February 2023 from 9.30–16.30 Hours (Thailand Standard Time).

The meeting will be structured around the following priority areas:

1. Ensuring meaningful connectivity to close the gender digital divide and promoting gender transformative technology design, development and deployment.
2. Fostering inclusive education in the digital age and promoting women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers.
3. Implementing economic, labour and social policies that ensure women and girls are not left behind in the digital age and leveraging financing for inclusive digital development and gender transformative innovation.
4. Addressing online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination and protecting the rights of women and girls online.

The need to enhance the availability of comprehensive and accurate data and research, to inform efforts to advance gender equality and strengthen safeguards and accountability for gendered harms, will also be discussed as a cross-cutting concern.

To the extent possible, efforts will be made to ensure that each session will have representation from across the sectors related to the priority theme and geographical representation.

### 5. Contact

Ms. Channe Lindstrøm Oğuzhan, Social Affairs Officer, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP [lindstromoguzhan@un.org](mailto:lindstromoguzhan@un.org)

Ms. Hulda Ouma, Strategic Planning and Coordination Specialist, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UN Women [hulda.ouma@unwomen.org](mailto:hulda.ouma@unwomen.org)

*The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) provides an inclusive intergovernmental platform for governments and other stakeholders in the region to accelerate the implementation of global gender equality commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.*

*ESCAP works to ensure that gender equality is addressed holistically in order to develop forward-looking strategies and contribute to efforts towards gender equality, poverty reduction and economic growth in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.*

*The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and benefit women and girls worldwide.*

*UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific located in Bangkok, covers a total of 42 countries and exercises its triple mandate and functions at a regional level and in support of UN Women's offices and UN Country Teams in 24 countries across the region.*

## 6. Additional documents

1. [Background Note for: Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on the Sixty-Seventh Session of the Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW67\)](#).
2. [G20 Indonesia 2022: Collection of Policies and Recommendations to Improve Meaningful Participation of People in Vulnerable Situation in the Digital Economy](#).

### Expert Group Meeting Background Papers:

3. [Assessing the Gender Dimensions of Digital Inequality for Policy Action](#). Alison Gillwald, Executive Director, Research ICT Africa Network.
4. [Harnessing Technology and Innovation in the Digital Age to Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls](#). Londa Schiebinger, John L. Hinds Professor of History of Science; Director, Gendered Innovations in Science, Health & Medicine, Engineering, and Environment, Stanford University.