



# TUNIS FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

24,25,26 APRIL 2019



## HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

### BACKGROUND TO THE DISCUSSIONS

The Tunis Forum focussed on the role of small and medium sized enterprises, the importance of access to new forms of credit for women owned businesses and the opportunities and challenges that technology offers to protect women in public spaces.

Technological innovation offers opportunities to engage women in poor communities and women with disabilities in new ways. Economic, social and technological innovations can be opportunities to tackle gender equality but need to be seen as such and used to that end. There is a need for action to prevent the re-enforcement of gender stereotypes through new technology.

Internet and social media can provide a safe space for women especially girls to discuss sexual harassment and rights freely and with limited social barriers, but they can also be platforms for new forms of pervasive abuse. Promoters of women rights, civil society and other organisations, should identify innovative ways of how they can capitalise on these technology platforms to reach out to women and girls with the right information.

There is a need for creativity and innovation to capitalise on technology and to link activities of grassroots organisation with national level institutions, policy and reporting mechanisms. Technology can be a cost-effective way of linking grassroots activities to national level interventions and ensuring that they influence policies and legislation.

Collaborative action is needed between governments and civil society to produce better policies to protect women from cyber violence and render the Internet a safer space for all.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Cultivate innovation to empower women economically and foster greater gender equality while creating and harnessing new solutions that offer fresh perspectives to women's unpaid care work problems
- Integrate and apply a gender lens to technological, economic and social innovations that tackle global development challenges to consider how these challenges are affecting women differently.
- Enable women's access to technological tools, especially women living in poverty.
- Design programmes to educate and empower women with disabilities in all sectors of leadership to ensure that they have access to modern technology equipment.

### **Tackle online violence**

- Involve government and decision makers to produce better policies to protect women from cyber violence and make the internet a safer space form Women, girls, and women's rights organizations.
- Define and extend the concept of "violence against women in a public space" to include virtual public spaces. Build active online communities to take action against online violence against women.
- Develop a harmonised intersecting approach and legal definitions of cyber violence against women. Work to improve legal instruments that ensure the criminalisation of the most pervasive forms of cyber violence against women.
- Provide certifying training and Trainers of Trainers (ToT) sessions on how to spot online violence and how to deal with every form of it for those who are handling reports from online platforms to fill the gap between the existing regulations on harassment and violence and our realities.
- Improve data collection and the production of accessible, transparent and clear statistics about online violence to contribute to revealing the full extent of online violence and map the lack of gender sensitivity of cities.