Annex to G20 Leaders Declaration

G20 Initiative "#eSkills4Girls"

Transforming the future of women and girls in the digital economy

A gender inclusive digital economy

1. During their meeting in Hangzhou in 2016, G20 Leaders endorsed the G20 Digital Economy Development and Cooperation Initiative and committed to address ways to collectively leverage digital opportunities, cope with challenges, and promote the digital economy to drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development. In this vein, they agreed to improve the digital skills of all people to enable their equal and effective participation, especially in the digital economy.

2. Furthermore, G20 leaders endorsed the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (G20 Action Plan) and reaffirmed their commitment to achieve the ambition of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), covering all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development. The 2030 Agenda includes a call for harnessing digital technologies to advance women's empowerment (SDG 5) and a pledge to eliminate gender disparities in education (SDG 4). Collective actions from the G20 initiative #eSkills4Girls will be included in the list of actions mandated under the G20 Action Plan.

3. We welcome the G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Declaration which intends to promote action to help bridge the gender digital divide and the Roadmap for Digitalisation which calls for synergies with the work in the Development Working Group to further skills development and employment prospects for women and girls.

4. We, the G20 members, acknowledge that today more than 250 million fewer women than men are online worldwide.[1] We note with concern that the difference between the internet user rates for females and males, the Internet gender gap, exists across all regions and that it has increased in developing countries to 16.8 per cent since 2013.[2] The gender digital divide persists not only in women's and girls' access to, but also in their effective use of information and communication technology (ICT).

5. We recognize that depending on geographic and social conditions women and girls experience a number of interrelated barriers, including socio-cultural constraints of women's and girls' ICT use, lack of foundational literacy and digital skills, including digital financial literacy, and the underrepresentation of women in the IT-sector that prevent them from fully participating in the digital economy. This is particularly the case for women and girls who face multiple vulnerabilities as defined in the 2030 Agenda.

6. We emphasize the importance of digital technologies as a powerful catalyst for the economic, political and social empowerment and participation of women and girls. Digital technologies also serve as a tool to strengthen women's and girls' rights, inform their decision-making and to promote gender equality. Digital technologies also have the potential to reduce economic and social disparities. Digital Financial Inclusion and digital financial services that are accessible and appropriate for women are particularly important as they may increase women's financial autonomy and can improve the performance of their businesses. In this regard we support the work of the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (GPFI) to advance financial inclusion of underserved and vulnerable groups.

7. We agree that the role of women in the digital economy, particularly in low income, developing and emerging countries, should be further highlighted and supported. We acknowledge the findings and recommendations of the study on 'Women's Pathways to the Digital Sector: Stories of Opportunities and Challenges' as prepared by the German Presidency.

Promoting the participation of women in the digital economy

8. To strengthen our efforts to achieve the G20 leaders' goal to reduce the gap in gender labour force participation rates by 25 per cent by 2025, we recognize that digital skills are vital to participate in and succeed in the digital economy. A range of skills are needed, including: generic ICT skills; complementary ICT skills to perform new tasks associated to the use of ICT at work; specialist ICT skills to code, develop applications and manage networks; digital financial skills and

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[1] ITU (2016) Measuring the Information Society Report, p. 193 and
https://itu4u.wordpress.com/2016/12/21/who-is-working-to-address-gender-digital-divide-the-importance-of-mapping/

[2] ITU (2016) Measuring the Information Society Report, p. 193.

leadership skills. We recognize the need to provide women and girls with tailored opportunities to develop relevant skills and to effectively use them. We therefore particularly welcome and support the initiatives on quality female employment and the future of work of the G20 Employment Track in this regard.

9. We further recognize that exposure to women as positive role models in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) themed early grade reading materials, exposure to technology at an early age, education in digital technologies and the acquisition of digital skills are especially important to encourage girls into STEM subjects to lay the foundations for lifelong learning and to empower girls in the digital economy.

10. We underscore the significant role and potential of non-formal educational opportunities for women and girls, and the need to create educational opportunities for digital literacy for girls and women of all ages, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. We also focus on settings where conflict has exacerbated traditional cultural barriers for women and girls and call for conflict-sensitive approaches to promote women's and girls' education and economic empowerment.

11. We emphasize that increasing the representation of women and girls in STEM related programmes both in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and in higher education is key to increasing their representation in the digital economy. We further recognize that education and training offerings need to be aligned with the current and projected human resource needs in national ICT- related job markets.

12. We note that a lack of access and affordability are amongst the most important barriers to women and girls' initial access to and use of ICT in low income, developing and emerging countries. Considering that existing gender stereotypes make it difficult for women and girls to fully develop their capacities as users, employees, innovators and leaders, we recognize the crucial importance of gender equality in education and the need to address gender discriminating social norms, structures and institutions that may prevent access to education. Lowering or removing the cost barrier to help stimulate ICT access amongst women and girls also serves as a prerequisite to ICT use and the development of digital skills.

13. Equally, we recognize the need for generating resources to enhance women's and girls' digital privacy and security, including awareness and prevention of cyber violence as critical prerequisites to promote women's and girls' safety in the digital world. Cyber violence, from online harassment to malicious distribution of defamatory and illegal materials related to women and girls, can be a significant barrier to the development of women's and girls' digital skills and we underscore the need to prevent and respond to its various forms.

14. We recognize the need for the further development of content and services in a variety of languages and formats that are accessible to women and girls, particularly to the most vulnerable groups.

15. We emphasize that the participation of women in the digital economy, including in leadership and decision-making positions, is indispensable to economic growth and recognize the need to establish enabling environments.

16. We support the need for enabling women's and girls' entrepreneurship in the digital economy along with the G20 Entrepreneurship Action Plan agreed by Labour and Employment Ministers in 2016.

17. We recognize the need for reliable, coherent and comprehensive data on women and girls in ICT to support evidence-based decision-making at country level and acknowledge the importance of strengthening national capacities to collect and analyze data in this respect.

Our shared responsibility

18. We, the G20 members, seek to promote opportunities for collaboration and sharing best practice and lessons. We welcome the German presidency's initiative to establish, in consultation with other G20 members, the #eSkills4Girls online knowledge and exchange platform to collect and disseminate information, good practices and projects from G20 members that support the #eSkills4Girls initiative. The platform will also include information on existing initiatives from other stakeholders. We agree to actively contribute to the platform and to ensure its sustainability, in accordance with our respective capacities. We call on the UNESCO, UN Women, ITU and OECD, and other relevant international organizations to support the development of the platform and to ensure its dissemination, as agreed by G20 members.

19. We agree to encourage partnerships of all interested parties and stakeholders, in line with the 2030 Agenda, and to join efforts made by the public and private sector, international organizations, academia and civil society. We acknowledge the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age (EQUALS) as a multi-stakeholder initiative to accelerate global progress on bridging the gender digital divide.

20. In line with the Agenda 2063 of the African Union and its aspiration towards a well-developed digital economy, NEPAD Agency's E-Africa Programme and, in line with the G20 Africa Partnership Initiative, we are committed to partner with governments in Africa and join efforts to promote a gender-inclusive digital economy, taking into account different national capacities and priorities. We recognize the high-level political dialogue on the topic in the framework of the SMART Africa initiative. We acknowledge the vivid female tech and entrepreneur scene in Africa as basis for alliances between G20 and African countries.

21. We facilitate education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for women and girls in the digital economy in particular in low income and developing countries, including countries affected by conflict, in accordance with our respective capacities, with a focus on the following actions:

   i. We promote inclusive education systems with a focus on digital literacy skills. We encourage governments to create, promote and support projects and programmes that aim to bridge the gender gap in STEM. Integrating digital skills training into curricula and ensuring these curricula remain up-to-date are key priority areas of the initiative. It further requires gender-sensitive learning materials and gender-neutral learning environments for STEM subjects, practice-oriented pedagogies and more and better ICT training for teachers. Of particular importance is support for effective, interactive ways to teach digital literacy in resource-constrained settings.

   ii. We support non-formal education initiatives to promote women's and girls' exposure to technology and to support the development of ICT generic and specialist skills. Programmes could include technology camps, competitions, and online courses and we will explore possibilities to strengthen and build on existing global networks of civil society initiatives.

   iii. We promote higher education programmes, which equip young people - and especially young women - effectively with the skills needed for the ICT job market. We acknowledge the need to strengthen incentives and support structures for women, such as role models, scholarships, mentoring programmes and career counseling, as well as teacher training on gender issues.

   iv. We encourage taking steps to address gender-based discrimination and close the gender digital divide, including online gender harassment, gender-based cyber violence, including by working to overcome socio-cultural barriers to women's access to, and use of ICT. We support public information and awareness-raising campaigns to engage boys and men, local communities, teachers and families as well as all stakeholders in digitalisation policy to challenge stereotypes related to gender and ICT, and to prevent and respond to cyber violence.

   v. We encourage active prevention and response to cyber violence to ensure that online spaces are free from gender-based violence and safe spaces to allow women to be active digital citizens.

   vi. We work toward lowering the cost barrier, including through public-private partnerships that offer specialised incentives for female customers to adopt ICT. We support the use of financial resources from universal service funds to support ICT access for women and girls with special attention to broadband network roll-outs in rural areas.

vii.   We support existing and promote action to create public safe spaces for women and girls to access ICT together with non-governmental organisations and other local and international stakeholders.

viii.   We work towards improving an enabling environment – including through private sector engagement – for women to facilitate their entrepreneurship, innovation and participation in the digital economy including through support programmes such as entrepreneurship education and training, financing schemes, incubators and support networks. We support initiatives for strengthening women's and girls' ability to generate and disseminate their own content that reflects their viewpoints and experiences. We also support initiatives to develop digital financial services that are accessible and appropriate for women.

ix.   We promote the UN Women's Empowerment Principles, which define clear and transparent criteria for ensuring gender balance in recruiting, promoting and recognizing women in the public and private sector. We strongly encourage the private sector to integrate these into human resourcing activities.

x.   We incorporate gender-based analysis and gender equality initiatives as a cross-cutting issue in ICT and entrepreneurship policies, e.g. national digital strategies.

xi.   We encourage national statistical organisations to work together with all interested parties and stakeholders to enhance national capacities to collect and analyze data on women and girls in ICT.