Launch of Broadband Commission Working Group on Gender report

Cyberviolence Against Women & Girls: A Worldwide Wake-up Call

10am, Thursday 24 September 2015

UN Headquarters, NY

Good morning everyone, and thank you so much for taking time during this extremely busy week to be with us.

I would like to commend our Broadband Commission Working Group co-Chairs, Helen and Phumzile, as well as the many expert Working Group members with us here today, for their **bold** decision to tackle this challenging issue that is increasingly plaguing the on-line environment.

And let me also congratulate UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova, ITU's co-Vice Chair on the Broadband Commission, for her **commitment to online women's issues**, and her personal support for this important launch today.

Indeed, I'm absolutely delighted to see so many of you in the room for the launch of what we believe is a really ground-breaking UN report.

Tomorrow world leaders will gather here at the UN to adopt the 2030 agenda for sustainable development – 17 goals and 169 targets.

Paragraph 15 of the preamble recognizes that **" the spread of ICTs and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress**.

And its goal 5 recognizes the key role of ICTs in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

At the end of this year a predicted **3.2 billion** people will be on-line – and that's **3.2 billion** opportunities – the on-line world offers so much, to learn, create, share.. but as we will see in our report – all of that can be jeopardized if we don't address **now** in a more serious way the issue on-line violence.

The wake-up call we are launching today is long overdue…

This report has very wide ramifications, both for the safety and security of women and girls online, but also for the health of the online environment for everyone, and, by extension, the future growth of online services.

It is there in the papers every day stories about women and girls of all ages being victims of violence.

And for some this issue comes much closer, and can invade our homes, and our families, and our lives.

As Nidhi will explain some evidence indicates ¾ of **women globally** have already been exposed to or have experienced some form of online violence. **Women are more likely** than men to get sexually explicit/threatening messages online.

The issue of trust and 'Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs', has never been more important than it is today – this issue was highlighted 10 years ago when world leaders gathered for the WSIS.

Today, it is time for action and as the report rightly stresses a 3 prong approach is needed on
- sensitization,
- safeguards

- and sanctions…

At the ITU we launched in 2008 the child on-line protection initiative bringing together a wide range of players from governments, UN (UNODC, UNICRI, UNIDIR), Interpol, Internet Watch Foundation, and private sector to bring awareness to the important of online safety have developed over the years, sets of guidelines for parents, industry, educators, policy makers… while progress has been made, much more remains…

As Beeban Kidron said the 1st time we spoke -- it is time to be bold, be audacious….everyone needs to play their part – all stakeholders needs to come together..

We all have a role to play – perhaps most importantly as parents
– I am a mother of 4 teenagers – that equals
4 laptops,
4 mobile phones,
and even a few tablets….

When they 1st had their laptops it was easy – we only allowed use in the family room and dining rooms
– as their devices continued to grow – our oversight role for 2 working parents was put to the challenge—we now regularly have discussions over dinner about what is appropriate to post and what is not
– what it means to belong to certain groups on Whats App or other related apps -- should their friends be making in appropriate comments…
-- my rule – no devices in bedrooms at night

Tim Berners-Lee once said: "The future of the web depends on **ordinary** people taking responsibility for this **extraordinary** <u>resource</u> and challenging those who seek to **manipulate** the web against the public good."

WE are the ordinary people Berners-Lee spoke of; we have an imperative to act, and act now. Thank you.