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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the Meeting of the Working Group on the Digital  
Gender Divide  
Broadband Commission**

**Hong-Kong, 16 March 2017**

Mr Mats Granryd, Chief Executive Officer of GSMA,

Dear Friends,

Today, we meet to launch the Report of the *Working Group on the Digital Gender Divide -- on Recommendations for Action: Bridging the Gender Gap in Internet and Broadband Access and Use*.

...so much done in so little time!

I thank every member of the Working Group for their commitment – special thanks go to Mats Granryd and the team from GSMA for the brilliant collaboration we have forged over these past months.

I believe we all are aware of the urgency driving this Report.

Worldwide, there is a gender gap of 11 percent in male and female access to Internet.

This rises to 29 percent in Least Developed Countries.

When it comes to mobile phone ownership -- the most prevalent means of access to the Internet in developing countries -- women are 14 percent *less* likely to own a mobile phone than men.

In low-and middle-income countries, over 1.7 billion women still do not own a mobile phone.

These trends really are a wake-up call.

...especially, because they are deteriorating – the digital gender gap is deepening, not closing...

At a time of technological revolution, when all societies are seeking new sources of dynamism, the world simply cannot afford to ignore half of its creative genius, half of its innovation.

The digital gender divide means far too many women are prevented from grasping the benefits of the digital revolution and from contributing to further progress.

Divides of access and opportunity are exacerbated by divides in skills and competences, in services and applications, in local and multilingual content.

We cannot allow this to stand.

We need greater investment across the board, to reach the ‘unreached.’

We need redoubled efforts to advance digital literacy skills, to integrate gender perspectives into all strategies.

We need to collect sharper data to design better-targeted policies for relevant services, applications and content.

We must inspire every girl and woman to reach higher, by nurturing role models, by promoting new vocations.

Our overall goal is clear -- to build the inclusive knowledge societies we need for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The foundations of such societies lie in empowering every girl and woman with the opportunities and the abilities to create and share knowledge.

This is the message of our Report, and its *Call to Action*, to identify how the digital revolution can be an empowerment revolution through action at four levels – first, by

collecting sharper data; second, by crafting effective strategies and policies; third, by taking measures to overcome barriers' and lastly, by building stronger partnerships...

All this is essential to take forward Sustainable Development Goal 5.

This is why UNESCO has launched a *Massive Open Online Course on Media and Information Literacy* for young girls and young boys to become engaged citizens and agents of change.

This is why we are supporting the *African Youth Network* in Burkina Faso since last year, to train young women to develop mobile applications with the *YouthMobile initiative*.

We need more action, from all actors, across the board -- and I call on all of us today to take forward the recommendations in the Report.

These recommendations are inspiring and ambitious -- they are also clear and realistic.

The barriers preventing women from accessing and using Internet are complex and inter-related -- we need equally wide action.

Once again, I thank all members of the Working Group and look forward to our discussions.