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The Osaka Protocol

Gender Equality for Innovative and Sustainable Digital Societies

Preamble

The Parties to this Protocol,

Reaffirming the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter[1], the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[2], the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[3], and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action[4],

Deeply concerned that women comprise only 29,2% of the global technology workforce, with representation dropping to 22% at leadership levels[5], and that 189 million fewer women have access to the internet than men [6],

Recognizing that advancing UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality[7] particularly Target 5.b to "enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women", requires urgent action to bridge the digital gender divide,

Acknowledging the ongoing implementation of the UN Global Digital Compact, which aims to foster an inclusive, open, sustainable, fair, safe, and secure digital future for all, and emphasizing its emphasis on closing digital divides, accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goals, and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the digital space[8]

Concerned by the persistent gender biases embedded in AI systems and training data, which risk perpetuating and amplifying existing gender stereotypes and inequities in the digital space[9],

Emphasizing that if left unaddressed, the global digital gender gap could cost low- and middle-income countries an estimated $500 billion over the next five years.[10],

Determined to create meaningful and measurable progress toward gender equality for innovative and sustainable digital societies through coordinated global action,

Recognizing the interconnected nature of digital access, skills development, workforce participation, and technological bias in perpetuating or alleviating gender inequality,

Noting the critical role of both public and private sectors in achieving sustainable change through investment, policy reform, and organizational transformation,

Convinced that establishing measurable targets and commitments is essential for achieving substantial progress in advancing gender equality for innovative and sustainable digital societies,

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1: Definitions

For the purpose of the present Protocol:

"Party" or "Parties" shall mean any and all individuals, organizations, businesses (including SMEs and large corporations), academic and research institutions, governmental bodies at all levels, civil society groups, and international or intergovernmental entities that join this Protocol and commit to uphold its objectives and to endeavor, in good faith, to fulfill their respective commitments.

"Digital Gender Divide" refers to the gap between genders in access to, use of, and ability to influence, contribute to, and benefit from digital technologies.

"STEM" encompasses the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics related to study and work.

"AI" (Artificial Intelligence) refers to systems designed to perceive, learn, reason, and take actions that simulate human intelligence. This includes various technologies such as Machine Learning systems, Natural Language Processing, Computer Vision, Automated Decision Systems, and Generative AI.

"Impact" is defined as a measurable, meaningful, and sustainable change in the lives of beneficiaries through: Direct Impact, that involves beneficiaries directly participating in or benefiting from programs and initiatives; and/or Enabling Impact, that refers to systemic changes that enable increased access and participation.

"Empowerment of women and girls" concerns their gaining power and control over their own lives. It involves awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. This implies that to be empowered they must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), but they must also have the agency to use these rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (such as is provided through leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions).

Lastly, "Gender Equality" refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the differences that exist among and within these groups. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.

Article 2: Objectives

The objectives of this Protocol are:

1. To foster global initiatives that advance STEM education and skills for women and girls.
2. To support efforts that accelerate women's representation, leadership, and entrepreneurship in the STEM sector.
3. To promote universal digital access and inclusion for women and girls, particularly in underserved communities.
4. To encourage the development of ethical, unbiased, and inclusive technologies supported by appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks.

Article 3: Pledge

Committed to ongoing improvements towards the above objectives, the Parties to this Protocol pledge to:

1. **STEM Education and Skills** Drive initiatives that promote sustainable investment in digital education, skills training programs, and learning resources to ensure women and girls have equitable access to STEM education and career development opportunities.

2. **Representation, Leadership, and Entrepreneurship** Foster an environment that supports organizational structures and policies accelerating women's advancement in STEM sectors through inclusive leadership, hiring practices, mentorship programs, and dedicated support for women entrepreneurs and innovators.

3. **Digital Access and Inclusion** Facilitate universal digital connectivity and inclusion by supporting sustained investment in infrastructure, affordable access, and digital services, with targeted support for underserved women and girls in rural and marginalized communities.

4. **Ethical Technology Development** Encourage comprehensive frameworks for developing and deploying unbiased, gender-responsive technologies through inclusive representation and design principles, and robust governance mechanisms.

Article 4: Targets

The Parties to this Protocol target to contribute to initiatives that impact 100 million women and girls by 2030:

1. **Advance STEM Education:** Support programs that expand girls' and young women's access to quality STEM education, cultivating interest and foundational skills from primary through higher education.
2. **Strengthen STEM Workforce Capacity:** Develop comprehensive training, upskilling, and retention initiatives that foster representation, professional growth and career advancement for women.
3. **Promote Leadership Development:** Create pathways for women to advance into decision-making and senior leadership positions within technology sectors and related fields.

4. **Build Innovation Capacity:** Foster entrepreneurial ecosystems that provide women with the resources and funding needed to establish and scale technology ventures.
5. **Close the Gender Digital Gap**: Support efforts to reduce the gender digital divide through targeted infrastructure and connectivity initiatives.

4.1 Impact Categories

Impact will be measured quantitatively across three categories:

1. **Skills and Education Impact**:
   - Number of women and girls completing STEM education programs.
   - Number of participants in digital skills training initiatives.
   - Number of recipients of STEM scholarships and educational support.

2. **Professional Impact**:
   - Number of women placed in STEM roles.
   - Number of female leaders advanced in technology sectors.
   - Total amount of funding invested in women-led technology ventures.
   - Number of women participating in professional mentorship programs.

3. **Access Impact**:
   - Number of women and girls gaining new access to digital technologies.
   - Number of beneficiaries of infrastructure and connectivity initiatives.

Article 5: Committed Actions

The Parties to this Protocol shall make specific, measurable commitments that advance gender equality for innovative and sustainable digital societies. Each Party shall determine its commitments based on its capabilities, resources, and areas of expertise, while ensuring these commitments contribute to the Protocol's target of directly impacting 100 million women and girls by 2030. Commitments may encompass various forms of engagement, from implementing comprehensive training programs and establishing mentorship initiatives to creating targeted funds.

Parties shall clearly define their intended impact, specific initiatives, and number of beneficiaries, supported by regular progress reporting. The Protocol recognizes that meaningful progress requires contributions at different scales, and therefore provides a flexible framework for participation while maintaining focus on direct measurable impact.

5.1 Commitment Framework

5.1.1 Commitment Levels

Parties may participate at three levels:

1. *Pioneer Level: Transformative, large-scale commitments impacting 100,000+ women and girls*

2. ***Partner Level***: *Targeted programs impacting 10,000-100,000 women and girls*
3. ***Participant Level***: *Focused initiatives impacting up to 10,000 women and girls*

5.1.2 Commitment Areas

Each Party shall select one or more focus areas aligned with the Protocol's core objectives:

1. **STEM Education and Skills**: Advancing STEM education and skills development for women and girls globally
2. **Representation and Leadership**: Accelerating women's representation, leadership and entrepreneurship in the STEM sector
3. **Digital Access and Inclusion**: Extend universal digital access and inclusion for women and girls

5.2 Commitment Requirements

Each Party shall:

1. Select a commitment level appropriate to their capacity and resources
2. Define specific initiatives within their chosen focus areas that clearly contribute to the Protocol's objectives
3. Specify their expected contribution to the Protocol's 2030 target
4. Submit annual progress reports using the Protocol's standardized reporting framework

5.3 Commitment Evolution

Recognizing the dynamic nature of technological advancement and organizational growth, Parties may:

1. Review and adjust their commitments annually based on progress and learnings
2. Scale their engagement level as capacity increases
3. Modify focus areas in response to emerging needs and opportunities

Article 6: Monitoring and Reporting

The Parties to this Protocol agree to share organizational metrics and progress reports to enable measurement of collective impact and advancement towards the Protocol's objectives through standardized reporting frameworks.

To ensure transparency and accountability, progress will be tracked through a dashboard that provides visibility into both Parties' commitments and our collective impact. The dashboard will showcase each Party's specific initiatives, track their progress through annual reports, and measure advancement toward our 2030 Osaka Protocol target.

Article 7: Review Mechanisms and Governance Structure

7.1 Annual Reconvening
The Parties to this Protocol agree to reconvene annually to review progress, share best practices, and address emerging challenges in advancing gender equality for innovative and sustainable digital societies. The first reconvening shall take place at MWC Barcelona 2026, with subsequent locations to be determined by consensus among the Parties.

7.2 Review Process
At each annual meeting, the Parties shall:
- Assess collective progress toward the 2030 targets set by this Protocol
- Evaluate the effectiveness of implemented initiatives and commitments
- Identify areas requiring additional focus or resources
- Share ideas, success stories, and insights to foster innovation and collaboration

7.3 Governance Structure
A steering committee shall be established to:
- Oversee the implementation of the Protocol
- Coordinate the annual reconvening
- Facilitate information sharing and collaboration among Parties
- Propose amendments to the Protocol as needed

7.4 Reporting and Transparency
The dashboard mentioned in Article 6 shall serve as the primary tool for ongoing monitoring and reporting. The steering committee shall prepare an annual comprehensive report synthesizing progress across all commitment areas and impact categories.

7.5 Adaptive Management
Based on the annual review outcomes, the Parties may agree to adjust targets, modify commitment frameworks, or introduce new initiatives to ensure the Protocol remains effective and relevant in advancing gender equality for innovative and sustainable digital societies.

Article 8: Signature, Participation, and Best Efforts Commitment

8.1 Signature and Participation

Parties wishing to join the Protocol and contribute to its collective goals shall do so by completing and signing **Annex A: Signatory Commitment Form**. This form enables each Party to formally indicate their commitment level, numbers and areas aligned with the Protocol's objectives.

8.2 Best Efforts Commitment

The Parties commit to uphold the objectives of this Protocol and will endeavor, in good faith, to fulfill their commitments. While no sanctions shall arise from non-fulfillment, all Parties agree to use their best efforts to implement the Protocol's provisions.

Article 9: References

(1) United Nations. (1945). *CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS and STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE*. https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf

(2) United Nations. (1948, December 10). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

(3) United Nations General Assembly. "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979." *OHCHR*, United Nations, 18 Dec. 1979, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women .

(4) *United Nations Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing, 4-15 September 1995*.

(5) World Economic Forum. "Global Gender Gap Report 2023." *World Economic Forum*, 20 June 2023, www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/digest/ .

(6) ITU. "Facts and Figures 2024." *Itu.int*, 2024, www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/facts-figures-2024/ .

(7) United Nations. *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015*. 2015.

(8) "Global Digital Compact." *Un.org*, 2024, www.un.org/global-digital-compact/en.

(9) West, M., Kraut, R., & Chew, H. E. (2019). I'd blush if I could: Closing gender divides in digital skills through education. UNESCO & EQUALS Skills Coalition. https://doi.org/10.54675/rapc9356

(10) UN Women. *PROGRESS on the SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS the GENDER SNAPSHOT 2024*. 2024. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024-en.pdf

(11) World Economic Forum. "Global Gender Gap Report 2024." *World Economic Forum*, 11 June 2024, www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/.