**Report of HIC- Women and Habitat Africa Working Group Parallel event on: Digital Inclusion for all: Key to achieving gender equality and empowerment of Women and Girls in the access, use, ownership and control of land and habitat related rights.**

OPENING.
**Facilitator:** Dr. Ify Ofong, Representative to the United Nations & Convener, HIC Women and Habitat Africa Working Group
This Working Group is made up of members and friends across Africa. It tries to tackle historical challenges facing women and girls in their habitat. The theme of CSW67 is relevant to address key issues facing rural women and girls in Africa, in some areas of Asia and Latin America. How can digital inclusion be key to have ownership and control of land and habitat related rights. To ensure that no woman or no girl is left behind they need access and capacity and skills to use and access digital innovations and technology. 5.5 target= enhancing use of enabling technology to promote empowerment of women. Women are underrepresented in design of technology. Digital technology can help women bypass traditional challenges and to engage in markets.

**Moderator:** Makiko Tagashira, Fmr. Chief, Social Policy Analysis Section, Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD) UNDESA, USA  Was dedicated to advance social development. She supported the work of CSoD and the Third Committee and provided inputs into the HLPF. August 2020, she organized an EGM where we discussed role of digital technologies and need to address digital divide. She worked in ECOSOC Support in UNDESA and engaged in capacity development in Africa. She retired from the UN after 32 years.

As a student she used a typewriter. When she was working, she used Word Processor then a boxy computer in the library. Then the laptop came and then cell phones and then the smart phone. People in developing countries leap frogged by using phones for banking, communication, etc. Also there are risk of widening income inequality. In 2019 little more than have had access to the Internet and 2022 2/3 of world's population now has access (11% growth during COVID). Those without access – 60% live in Africa; 83% in US; Arab = 73%; Asia Pacific is 60+%. Gender gap = Europe = only 1%; Lower middle income countries gap = 10-11% between men and women.

How to address digital divide?
1. Digital inclusion
    a. Access/infrastructure

b. Affordability
c. Skills
d. Relevant content is important, different languages. People need to understand benefits of digital technologies.

**Speakers:**

1.Liliane Nkunzimana, Representative to the UN,  Secretary, NGO Committee on Social Development New York. Youth development, peace and security are her focus areas. She worked on youth and families in an educational programme. Worked on government funded projects and in the private sector.

Reflections on the priority for CSW67:
Technology can be a real tool to reflect us. Technology sector has been male dominant so increasing women in designing and content would expand the approaches.

How do we move forward?
1. Contributions of women and girls
2. Analyze underpinnings of technology
   a. Must identify and connect tools to people's needs.
   b. Think critically about technology and potential tradeoffs.

How to lower barriers, support markets and actors; investment in digital skills, etc = concept note.
Example: In Haiti public private ventures "Small holder supporter for sorghum" with USAID, InterAmerican Bank and local people who managed the project to increase local yields. Mobile technology was used to collect data – app for platform for agricultural extension agents in the capital with local farmers re pests, weather, how sorghum went from provinces to the capital. Application data informed decisions and improved agricultural crops. The firm has now has update in-house apps working with a number of products of maize, coco, etc. It has conducted survey of women headed households.

Lessons learned:
1. Reduced forms.
2. Registered plots
3. Increased quality of field
4. Adoption of best practices
5. Increased more time of experts with farmers

2.Yolande Hendler, General Secretary, Habitat International Coalition, South Africa
Traditional barriers to women's land, inheritance, and habitat rights through education, etc.
HIC= global coalition that fights for recognition, defense, and full implementation of the right of everyone to secure place in which to live in peace and dignity with 4 areas:
1. Housing and land rights
2. Social production of habitat = community led approaches to rights to housing and finding market alternatives
3. Habitat and gender
4. Habitat and sustainable environment

Gender cuts across all aspects of habitat-related rights, strengthening women's leadership to influence public policies, challenges prejudices. Supports implementing policies to support inheritance rights.

Statistics:

1. For every dollar man, women earn 77 cents
2. Women carry out 2.5 times more unpaid work.
3. Women are targeted victims of violence at home and in conflict.
4. Environmental, disaster, climate change (80% of those displaced are women)
5. Less than 15% of the world's landholders are women (5% in Middle East and North Africa; 18% in Latin America).
6. Less likely to have legal land document proof and less likely to have their names on them.

Resulting in:
1. Lower income
2. Lower ability to access credit to start businesses or to improve agricultural productivity.

Giving women the same opportunities as men could rise agricultural production by 2.5% to 4% in the poorest regions and the number of malnourished people could be reduced by 12-17%.
How do we address these barriers through digital learning? Note on digital technology – need legislative and cultural responses not just by technology.

HIC co-learning space on feminist approaches:
1. Many members couldn't participate due to lack of Internet access
2. Developed by HIC in response to members for them to connect and to build understanding and advocacy.
3. 4 co-learning based on human rights.
4. To enhance communication on collective ways of thinking and acting
5. Invited Latin America, Sub Sahara Africa and the MENA region.
6. Heart is = idea of building social force – finding organizations pushing in the same direction. Social force=learning, prioritizing, acting together with that knowledge
7. How does it work? Not from expert to a learner as each hold valuable experiences for the whole; member led who developed a curriculum according to self-identified thematic priorities. Facilitators took these and jointly over time (interpretation in 4 languages as did documents). Had 4 zoom real learning opportunities in 4 languages with google classroom learning possible.
8. What did we speak about?
a. Illustration summarized the journey of participants over 4 sessions.
b. Looking what is a feminist approach was first – invited some members and leaders from 45 year HIC history looking at how marginalization happens at multiple levels.
c. Second session looked at women and land rights with speakers from each region and spoke about different strategies that HIC members pursue eg documenting land rights violations; campaigning for changes
d. Third session – who takes care of those who care for us. Women are not just users of the city but are also women who drive the caring city and that care is provided mainly by women. Regional differences came out.
e. Fourth session – what does advocacy and action look like

What came out of this?
1. Produced 4 podcasts to be released this month.
2. Formed a cross regional online working group for cross regional learning and advocacy.
3. Calling for one day – International Women's Day is insufficient.

3.Harem el-Hady, Representative of the Arab region BIC
Joined Bahai international community as representative from the Arab region. He is Egyptian who helped draft a new international constitution. Consultant for Aspen Institute.

Inspired by points made by speakers:
1. SMASH project in Haiti – people can make a difference.
2. Statistics shows disparity in terms of women being landlords.

Role of education in addressing systemic issue of inequality between gender in our society. Key question: what is education for? Are we looking for education as a means for increasing wealth; to gain further rights. He thinks we need to consider values that underline our educational system. He offers – education for service and for investigation of the truth. Issues are multifaceted. Digital technology can ensure that rights of women can help them facilitate cash transfers, identifying weather patterns, etc.

Challenge that we face if we look at technology as an end in itself or a means. Example: DRC Bahai began publishing series of articles to provide communities on what crops they should plant based on research. Provided education to an existing network of thousands who used it to ensure food security.

Second story: During the pandemic, there was a lot of misinformation. People used WhatsApp to share information and used songs to transmit information. Lyrics described the disease and what you can do in the local language via radio.

Town or community meetings bring people together to reflect on issues, sharing of experiences. Bahai has tried to use this format to disseminate information. Bahai has an assembly of 9 elected members who look after their community was utilized to convey important information.

Story #3: He was invited to support a 23-year-old Cairo based woman to start a young group who come together in a safe space to explore how they can acquire skills and knowledge to be of service to others. Pandemic resulted in schools shut. She got in touch with all members using her father's phone to find out how they were doing. She decided to provide Internet access to others using her father's phone. They continued to have junior group meetings learning power of expression and to collectively think of service to offer to society.

4.Melvine Wajiri, Founder and CEO, PEP Africa International:
Over 21 years championing civil society relief in disaster relief in need in the US and in Africa. Commitment to inclusion. Worked for youth led entity in Houston, Texas. Has organized workshops ensuring youth's voices are heard. He offered a brief video on the US Connected Women initiative supported by Sweden and others from 2010.

"When you combine power of technology with the determination of women, you can revolutionize the world."

Policies: video highlighted policies with regulations. Lack of access in rural communities.

His grandmother in Gambe has mobile phone where he can send her money without bank paperwork.

Practices – mentioned SMASH project in Haiti. Are changing. Many are made here in NY. We are not member states who own the UN and make the decisions. So how do we collective push the policies.

Inclusion - education has a role.

In Africa:
40% of businesses are owned by women, many small ones. Certain practices where women brought money back to husband but now they get it directly.

Who has the resources?
Data is the new currency.


## Q & A:

Asked about how to deal with cultural norms that are barriers to access to technology e.g. control by men over wives or daughters who do not trust them to have technology themselves. Liliane: noted education – lifelong learning to change norms. HIC: role for the state eg on inheritance rights and security of tenure.

Melvine Wajiri: we do not have control over behavior. How do people embrace technology is an issue; think that technology might take away some of our rights. If we support rights-based approach, no one infringes on you.

Canadian with family from the Horn of Africa she asked how we look toward local digital companies. Another participant who has written over 100 technology articles. Innovation from Africa that we don't hear about eg an oral type of Facebook from a man in Mali. Someone took digital minutes and turned them into

crypto money. Who are you supporting who is doing real work? She advocates online eg complaint about trash and got mayor to respond.

Arab region panelist: Sometimes we don't look at places only as consumers not as innovators with start ups. Are we enabling increased disparity between rich and poor and exporting it to Africa. Come back to underlining values and transmitting them from childhood.

Moderator: encouraged documenting good practices; transfer knowledge which should be owned by everyone, and everyone should benefit.

Dr. Ify Ofong: thanked all for participating in the event..