

## **WSIS Gender Caucus**

The WSIS Gender Caucus is a multi stakeholder network, which proposes to implement a coordinated and strategically positioned effort to integrate gender equality perspectives in the WSIS process. The project activities to achieve this objective will include effective lobbying and advocacy, increased participation by women, including gender and ICT specialists, information dissemination and outreach, capacity building for gender and ICT advocates and electronic networking.

The project “Bridging the Gender Gap in the Information Society” is supported by the Nordic donors. The duration of the project is from 2003 to 2006. In implementing this project, WSIS Gender Caucus is working closely with UNIFEM and with the ITU.

The WSIS-Gender Caucus has identified five strategic priority issues, which should be integrated into the preparations for the WSIS and its outcomes, these are:

- Capacity building and training to support wide participation by women and gender ICT specialists in policy and decision making and monitoring mechanisms at all levels in the telecommunications and ICT sector; and to support women’s greater access and control over resources necessary for their empowerment.
- Facilitating women’s active participation in the telecommunications and ICT sector through programmes that encourage and support entrepreneurship and women’s employment, and women’s access to international markets.
- Reform of decision-making processes in the telecommunications and ICT sector to ensure good governance, greater accountability to all stakeholders and to improve the participation and representation of women and gender equality advocates in all levels of policy making including participation across generations;
- Ensuring that ICTs contribute to the goals of peace, equality and development by including plans to develop and encourage innovative ICT applications in reducing poverty, HIV/AIDS elimination, conflict resolution and peace building, supporting women’s reproductive and productive roles, education and literacy programmes and in reducing violence against women; and,
- Support for the recognition of a Universal Right to Communicate in the international human rights framework and participation of the women’s human rights community as a key partner in the development of these rights and activities.

A Nordic Reference Group on Gender Issues plans to work closely with the Caucus to ensure cooperative projects between Southern based researchers and scholars and their Scandinavian counterparts. This partnership has the potential to identify strategies for bridging the gender divide in the Information Society through thorough and creative research and analysis.