CSW62 side-event

African Girls can CODE: Empowering African Women and Girls through ICT and Coding

Date: Tuesday 13 March 2018
Time: 2:00 - 3:30 pm
3 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, 305 East 47th Street, 5th Floor

Panelists:

Mme Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka  
UN Under-Secretary-General, UN Women Executive Director

H.E. Amira El Fadil  
AU Commissioner for Social Affairs

Ms. Ulla Toernaes  
Danish Minister for Development Cooperation

Ms. Ursula Wynhoven  
ITU Representative to the United Nations

Ms. Rediet Abebe  
Ethiopian PhD candidate in Computer Science at Cornell

The CSW62 side-event “African Girls Can CODE” will bring together prominent women leaders, policymakers and women in ICT to share their ideas on how to inspire African young girls and women to pursue a career in ICT and coding.

The event will also launch UN Women and ITU’s new regional Programme: African Girls Can CODE Initiative (AGCCI) 2018-21.

Participants will speak on how to enhance entrepreneurship and new business opportunities through use of new information technology (also known as “Digital for Development” or D4D) and how African countries can draw on new digital - including mobile - technologies and skills transfer to allow business models and entrepreneurship to leapfrog, for example among female tech entrepreneurs, and start-ups of young entrepreneurs.
Few women are partaking in computing careers. Globally, only 28.4% of those engaged in ICT and STEM are women and in Sub Sahara only averages of 30.0% women are among those engaged in STEM careers. So the technology that the world uses today is being created by a relatively homogeneous group of people. The patterns in African countries are ever growing on a negative scale and this will affect innovation, problem solving, and creativity.

It is important that many more girls and women enter ICT and coding. Coding for girls and women is basically needed to close the gender gap in the tech world and is part of closing the overall gender digital divide. There are for example some 250 million fewer women online than men, and the gap is widening (from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016).

Coding and other ICT skills are essential in the future labor market. By 2020, it is expected that more than 7.1 million jobs will be displaced, and by 2050, half of the jobs that currently exist will have disappeared. That means that 65% of the children entering primary school today could eventually work in jobs that do not yet currently exist.

So if African girls and women are to be part of the fast-growing sectors in the future job market, they simply need to develop ICT skills. For this we need to create enabling learning and professional environments that challenge gender stereotypes about young girls and women in coding and ICT.

The challenges young girls face when pursuing careers in ICT and coding are multilayered. To change this, the side-event will share ideas and inspiration on how to act for African girls and women to bridge the gender gap in the future world of technology.