STATEMENT TO THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
October 20, 2017

The imperative to advance gender equality in and through the media and ICTs has been indicated since the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) and its two Strategic Objectives:

- Strategic objective J:1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.
- Strategic objective J:2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media.

The 47th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2003 underlined the need for media and telecommunications companies to address gender-based discrimination.

More recently, the centrality of this agenda has been reaffirmed in debates and initiatives at the international level, in the contexts of the Global Alliance for Media and Gender (GAMAG); the United Nations Women Global Compact 'Step it up for gender equality in the media'; UNESCO's Gender Sensitive Indicators for Media, the UNESCO University Network on Gender Media and ICT, as well as by a number of advocacy and scholarly contributions to the debate.

At the same time, attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 5 – Gender Equality –, requires gender equality in and through the media and ICTs to be improved.

To what extent have these recommendations been achieved?

Progress in advancing women's rights in and through media: An assessment
Evidence shows that past recommendations have been widely disregarded by governments, international and regional organizations, and media and telecommunications companies as well. New industry players such as social media platforms have also failed to take responsibility for implementing effective strategies that protect women from online abuse.

The Global Media Monitoring Project coordinated by the World Association for Christian Communication shows that in 2015, women constituted only 24% of news sources globally, up from 17% in 1995, a snail's pace rate of change towards equality. Stereotypes still abound in media, and especially in advertising with governments leaving the watchdog role to scholars and activists. Women journalists, researchers and non-governmental organisations have been at the forefront of work to mainstream gender in media content. The preliminary findings of the 2015 UNESCO Global Survey on Gender and Media notes that only 19% of countries say publicly owned media have developed specific gender awareness programmes.

In 2011, the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) published findings from its study of women's employment in news companies, covering 59 nations and 522 organisations, finding that men held 75% of both top management and board positions: women's presence was strongest in routine news gathering roles and weakest in technical roles (eg camera work, creative direction). In

2013, the European Institute for Gender Equality published the findings from a study of all its Member States plus Croatia (28 countries). The study found that, of 3376 senior posts, 30% were held by women.16% of CEOs were women as were 21% of Chief Operating Officers. Although a proportion of women are in positions of authority, they are much less likely to be in positions of power.

An estimated 4.4 billion people – mostly poor, female, rural and living in developing countries – have no access to the Internet. According to the International Telecommunication Union, internet penetration rates are higher for men than for women in all regions of the world and the global Internet user gender gap grew from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016.

Cyber-violence against women and girls (VAWG) is emerging as a global problem. The Report on Cyber Violence published by the Broadband Commission in 2015, reveals that almost three quarters of women online have been exposed to some form of cyber violence, and urges governments and industry to work harder and more effectively together to better protect the growing number of women and girls who are victims of online threats and harassment.

The UN Secretary-General's recent report (August 2017) on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity notes the "increase in violence, threats and harassment against women journalists". Offline, women journalists and bloggers continue to face disproportionate risks of physical and sexual violence, as acknowledged by the UN Plan of Action on Journalists' safety. Online, the situation is also dire. The impact of gender issues on women sources and journalists working in digital contexts was highlighted in the 2017 UNESCO study 'Protecting Journalism Sources in the Digital Age' (Posetti 2017).

There is a lack of gender mainstreaming in the curricula of communication and journalism schools.

Scarcity of sex-disaggregated data limits our analysis and the possibility to improve informed policies. Official data is very low, as most of governments are not documenting gender inequalities in media and ICT.

The problems are linked to non-compliance by States of UN Human Rights treaties to ensure basic human rights of all women, and non-compliance of media companies to laws and regulations enacted at global, national and industry levels.

While the Beijing Platform for Action lists actions which could achieve gender equality, there is no single formal policy on gender and communication. This is largely due to the power of the media and telecommunications sectors which have been opposed to regulation that attempts to protect the rights of citizens to communicate.

But there is a glint of hope as women's media networks and activists keep the vision of Section J alive. They do this through the production and distribution of on line content, the establishment of women-led community radio stations and online media platforms and innovation with appropriate and accessible technology.

Recommendations
The Global Alliance on Media and Gender urges the Commission on the Status of Women to:

Encourage Member States to:
- Improve laws, regulations and policies on gender equality in and through the media and digital rights, with a rights-based approach; to eliminate gender stereotypes in content; to improve the

access and participation of women in these institutions - including regulatory bodies; to guarantee the safety of media and journalism women professionals and their labour rights; to improve freedom of expression and women's access to information – on and offline; to promote changes in curricula of journalism and communication schools, and to eliminate violence against women online and offline.

- Ensure that broadcast and digital policies and regulations support women's media networks, in particular community media/ radio and feminist networks, including young women, to use accessible and appropriate media (including social) and ICT to bridge the gap in mainstream media content in particular via the public airwaves.
- Ensure that women have equal rights to economic resources, access to and control over media ownership, and the ownership of information and communication technologies.
- Implement frameworks for algorithmic transparency, incorporating methods such as third party audits.
- Public interest content production online and in traditional media by women's groups needs to be promoted through appropriate policies for subsidised broadband connectivity, local language content creation and so on.
- Make specific references to the role and relevance of media and communications within general gender equality national strategies; as well as for a specific commitment to gender equality in national media policies and digital strategies, and in international communication governance provisions.
- Produce regular data based on gender-sensitive indicators, to report on the different dimensions of the gender, media and ICT agenda – contents, access and participation, labour rights, violence and harassment against journalists online and offline, gender and media education, etc.
- Promote digital literacy programmes with a gender component that specifically focusses on building the information and media literacies of marginalised women and girls, encouraging efforts by women's organisations in using digital media and online spaces to amplify their stories.

Encourage media and ICT organisations to:
- Adopt formal and integrated equality strategies and policy frameworks, including support mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and action.
- Adhere to national rights' laws and other legislation relevant to women's human rights and gender equality.
- Enact programmes that promote overall wage equality, maternity leave, and pregnancy support.
- Tackle online gender-based harassment and violence, and immunity from the law.
- Undertake a regular Gender Audit of the workforce to identify women and men's presence at all levels; review recruitment and promotion policies to ensure they are fair and transparent.
- Ensure that there are policies in place for reporting discrimination and clear sanctions where behaviour of staff is found to be in breach of such policies.
- Provide proper training and support for those working in hostile environments.

Finally, we call for interdisciplinary and inter-sectorial multi-stakeholder exchanges of information, knowledge and good practices.

Submitted on behalf of GAMAG by WACC, Interim General Secretary
20 October 2017