

**MEDIA RELEASE BY THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE (CHRAJ) ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY 2023 ON THE THEME: “DigitALL: INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY”**

The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice in solidarity with the International Community commemorates International Women’s Day, this 8<sup>th</sup> day of March 2023. On this auspicious occasion, the Commission calls for sustained effort and committed leadership in establishing an all-inclusive environment for development of women and girls all over the world.

This year’s International Women's Day is celebrated on the theme “**DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality**”. The focus is to explore how digital inequality impacts the social positioning of women in society while emphasizing the need to expedite implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 5 which seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

It is regrettable that women continue to face challenges of gender inequality which prevents them from achieving their full potentials. The gendered dimension of inequality in the society cuts across all spheres: economic development; education; access to healthcare; income; vulnerability to violence and even political

representation. This is exemplified in Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) publication that women in public sector employment earn on average GHS165 less than their male counterparts, representing a gender pay gap of 6%<sup>1</sup>. These inequalities are fueled by some cultural and social practices, high levels of illiteracy and general lack of awareness.

The Worldwide web or Internet is an essential tool that brings different cultures closer to more people, making it easier and accessible. It also nurtures the rise of new forms of expression for art and the spread of knowledge. There has been a large emergence of the use of technology within Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in Ghana. This is evidenced by schools, institutions, individuals and businesses deploying and using technology in their daily operations. Although there is an increased use of technology within the country, there is still a huge gender disparity. The GSS, for instance, records that 17% of the Ghanaian population aged 12 years and older do not own any functional ICT device; and the proportion is higher among females (19.3%) than males (14.1%) and in rural (26.6%) than in urban (9.8%) areas.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, 29% of Ghanaian women used the internet in 2020 compared to 20% in 2016, which is a significant progress toward closing of the gender gap in accessing the internet.<sup>3</sup> The gap in internet access is just one element of a much greater digital gender divide which women are less able to use and influence the technology that is reshaping our world. There are many ways the internet we have today is not working equally well for men and women, from gaps in quality of connectivity and digital skills to threats that disproportionately impact the safety and rights of women and girls thereby preventing them from fully benefiting from the opportunities that digital technology presents. Women and girls often experience online abuse centered

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<sup>1</sup> Ghana Statistical Service - *Ghana 2022 Earnings Inequality in the Public Sector*.

<sup>2</sup> Ghana Statistical Service (2022) *PHC General Report Vol. 3G – Information and Communication Technology 27*.

<sup>3</sup> World Wide Web Foundation.

around harassment, hate speech, cyber stalking and non-consensual distribution of photos.

Although Ghana has a cybersecurity legislation<sup>4</sup> and a Cyber Security Authority (CSA) with mandate to regulate cybersecurity activities, including providing technical support for law enforcement agencies to prosecute cyber offenders and promote the protection of children online, these measures appear inadequate to protect women's rights online.

Accordingly, the Commission urges the Government and its agencies, especially the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation (MoC&D) including the following Agencies under it: The CSA, the National Communication Authority (NCA) and the Data Protection Agency (DPC) to intensify public education and awareness on responsible use of technology and the internet and implement innovative policies meant to utilize the internet to reduce gender inequality. These relevant agencies should further mount surveillance to arrest and prosecute perpetrators of online bullying of women to serve as deterrent to others.

As we observe this Day, the Commission calls on Government and its relevant agencies as a matter of priority to design and/or implement innovative policies to improve access to technology by Ghanaian women and girls in the short through the medium to the long term.



Joseph Whittal

***Commissioner***

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<sup>4</sup> See Cybersecurity Act, 2020 (Act 1038).