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Women's and girls' rights and artificial intelligence and related digital technologies

Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls*, **

Summary

In the present report, the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls examines how the growth of artificial intelligence (AI) and related digital technologies has profoundly transformed the landscape in which women and girls exercise their human rights. The report recognizes the genuine potential of AI to promote gender equality and address historical inequalities, while stressing that the design and deployment of AI systems must be grounded in feminist and human rights-based approaches. It documents the limited attention that existing regulatory efforts have devoted to the impact of AI on women and girls and calls on States to reassert leadership on AI governance in the light of profound and gendered power asymmetries. The report identifies the preconditions necessary to advance substantive gender equality in the digital age and builds on the growing global call to establish AI redlines, urging the immediate integration of feminist and gender equality perspectives into those debates. The report contains the Working Group's recommendations regarding immediate and medium- and long-term measures for Member States, the United Nations and the private sector to transform the structural barriers to women's and girls' rights in this area.

The Working Group calls for the prioritization of a substantive gender equality approach to the digital space, strengthening multilateral cooperation to ensure gender equality while urgently addressing harms from rapidly developing technologies, including AI. These technologies are being developed and deployed in a context shaped by entrenched gender inequality and intersecting forms of discrimination, and their governance must therefore confront and address that context.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report consists of thematic analysis and recommendations on women's and girls' rights and artificial intelligence (AI) and related digital technologies. In the annex, an update is provided on the main activities of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls from the time of the submission of its previous report[1] until April 2026.

2. The growth of AI and related digital technologies has profoundly transformed the landscape in which women and girls exercise their human rights. The use of AI across the public and private sectors is already compounding existing patterns of discrimination. The impact is increasingly felt by women and girls as these technologies are integrated into the institutions, platforms and digital infrastructure of everyday life. This is particularly true for women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, disability, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity and other aspects of status or identity.

3. The Working Group stresses that the design and deployment of all digital technologies, including AI tools, must be grounded in feminist and gender-responsive approaches and in compliance with international human rights law, principles and standards.[2] Yet, despite well-documented gender biases and discrimination in AI, existing regulatory frameworks and private sector approaches to AI devote minimal or no attention to gender-responsive design or the integration of gender expertise. Too many AI products neither adequately prevent harm to women and girls nor support the active realization of their rights. Closing this gap requires urgent regulatory action, institutional and corporate accountability, sustained funding and the systematic inclusion of feminist gender expertise within public and private sector institutions. The rapid expansion of discourse on AI has also diverted attention from unresolved digital inequalities, even as consensus builds on the obligation of States to ensure access to the Internet and basic digital technology as a public good.[3]

4. For the purposes of this report, the Working Group relies upon the definition of an AI system used by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): "a machine-based system that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments".[4]

5. Feminist, gender-responsive and human rights based approaches to digital technology recognize the gender-unequal nature of societies, the resulting biases in the data on which AI systems are trained and the gendered power dynamics that shape technological design and development.[5] The Working Group is particularly concerned about the way in which AI intensifies existing harms for women and girls through its integration into the infrastructure, institutions and technologies of daily life. These harms are compounded by persistent structural barriers, namely the male-dominated nature of the professional field, accountability deficits for violations by private sector actors, inadequate regulation and the market logics that normalize or incentivize discriminatory and misogynistic features. As one participant in consultations with civil society participant observed, misogyny is not a design flaw; it is a feature of systems that are designed to capture and maintain attention in a patriarchal world.[6]

6. At the same time, the Working Group recognizes the genuine potential of AI and related technologies to promote gender equality and to begin addressing historical inequalities. In the present report, the Working Group identifies three preconditions for

[1] A/HRC/59/45.
[2] A/HRC/56/68, paras. 59–63.
[3] A/HRC/17/27, para. 66.
[4] See https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/03/explanatory-memorandum-on-the-updated-oecd-definition-of-an-ai-system_3c815e51/623da898-en.pdf.
[5] See Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein, "Introduction: why data science needs feminism", in *Data Feminism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2020); and Judy Wajcman and Erin Young, "Feminism confronts AI: the gender relations of digitalisation", in *Feminist AI: Critical Perspectives on Algorithms, Data, and Intelligence Machines*, Judy Browne and others, eds. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023).
[6] See also Wajcman and Young, "Feminism confronts AI".

ensuring that AI and digital technology advance, rather than undermine, the meaningful realization of women's and girls' rights: bridging the digital divide; harnessing AI and digital technologies to bolster rather than undermine women's and girls' human rights; and promoting the meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls in public and political life.[7] These preconditions do not provide an exhaustive account of needed reforms, but rather identify the systemic changes most likely to have a meaningful and immediate impact. The report also addresses the gendered dimensions of emerging global deliberations on AI redlines, domains in which AI is causing and will continue to cause impermissible harm. The findings should be read alongside the Working Group's CREATE framework, a practical and actionable tool for achieving substantive gender equality in the digital sphere, including in the regulation of AI.[8]

7. In preparing this report, the Working Group conducted consultations with Member States, United Nations entities, over 100 civil society actors, women and girls, academics, the private sector and technologists.[9] Several themes emerged across regional consultations: the importance of participatory approaches to AI development with the meaningful inclusion of marginalized communities; the value of pluralistic understandings of knowledge; and serious concerns about the extractive and exploitative power dynamics involved in data cultivation and processing.[10] The Working Group expresses its deep gratitude to all stakeholders for their contributions. While no written submissions were received from private sector actors, several companies participated in bilateral and multi-stakeholder discussions with the Working Group. The Working Group underscores the need for more systematic engagement of the private sector with human rights and feminist stakeholders.

II. Regulation of artificial intelligence and women's and girls' rights

8. The international human rights obligations of States on gender equality that are applicable to AI and related digital technologies are robust and well established. They include, among others, the obligations contained in articles 1–3, 5, 7, 8 and 11–13 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which articulate binding obligations to eliminate discrimination in all fields and require proactive measures to address indirect and structural discrimination, including where AI systems produce disparate or exclusionary outcomes, as further elaborated upon by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its general recommendations No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women and No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education; articles 2, 3, 17, 19, 25 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which protect privacy, freedom of expression, equality before the law, political participation and effective remedy, all of which are being increasingly affected by AI-enabled surveillance, profiling, content moderation and automated decision-making; and articles 2, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13 and 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which impose duties to ensure non-discriminatory access to work, education, social protection, health and scientific progress as AI systems are integrated into core public services.

9. These protections are further reinforced through articles 1, 2, 5 and 6 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which are particularly relevant where AI systems produce racially discriminatory outcomes that intersect with and compound gender-based discrimination; articles 2, 3, 12, 13 and 16 as elaborated upon by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its general comment No. 25 (2021); articles 1, 7, 11, 14, 16, 25, 33 and 55 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; and

[7] See D'Ignazio and Klein, "Introduction: why data science needs feminism".

[8] See A/HRC/WG.11/42/1.

[9] Submissions received are available at https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-inputs-2026-thematic-report-gender-equality-digital-space-and-age.

[10] Regional consultations with Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Western Europe and others, Eastern Europe and Asia and the Pacific.

articles 5, 9, 22 and 27 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights further establish the responsibility of private sector actors – including AI developers and technology companies – to respect human rights and provide access to remedy across their operations and value chains.

10. Complementary protections are reflected in regional instruments, including the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) (arts. 8, 10 and 14), the European Social Charter (Revised) (arts. 1, 3, 11, 14, 30 and E), the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Convention (arts. 3, 4 and 17), the American Convention on Human Rights (arts. 1, 11, 13, 23 and 24), the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (arts. 6 and 7), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (arts. 2, 3, 9 and 13) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (arts. 2, 9 and 13). The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains a foundational normative reference for this mandate, affirming the indivisibility of women's rights and the structural conditions necessary for their realization.

11. Together, these instruments affirm that States may not outsource or dilute their human rights obligations to the private sector, or through the use of AI tools or products. Persistent gaps arise not only from the lack of dedicated instruments on technology and the lack of human rights law standards in the field, but also from inadequate implementation, weak regulation, insufficient gender-responsive interpretation and limited accountability in the face of rapidly expanding technological power.

12. Despite this robust normative foundation, existing regulatory efforts have devoted limited attention to the impact of AI on women and girls and its potential for redressing existing gender inequalities. Most international, regional and multilateral standards and principles offer only passing reference to addressing "gender" or "gender inequalities",[11] and while most AI regulations emphasize non-discrimination, only some explicitly acknowledge gender-based threats.[12]

13. These gaps are compounded by the concentration of AI design and development, in a small number of countries and regions. The Working Group is deeply concerned that among the dominant actors, both State and private sector, the prevailing emphasis remains on enabling market-driven, growth-focused models underpinned by decentralized, non-binding and voluntary approaches to regulation. The European Union and Council of Europe have adopted the most comprehensive regulatory efforts that strongly emphasize protections for privacy rights, risk-based approaches, the right to equality and non-discrimination and an explicit requirement that activities throughout the life cycle of AI systems respect gender equality.[13] These efforts are welcome, but they remain the exception, not the norm, and their gender provisions must be strengthened and enforced.

14. Regional bodies have also made important contributions. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has emphasized the need to address the risk of AI exacerbating income inequality and its use in conflict.[14] The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has highlighted the need to protect freedom of expression and has approved the Inter-American Model Law to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Gender-Based Digital Violence against Women.[15] The Economic Commission for Europe has published guidance for

[11] See OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence (2019), and Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence, Belgrade Ministerial Declaration, 4 December 2024.

[12] See https://cset.georgetown.edu/publication/china-gen-ai-training-data-safety-standard-draft/, https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence and https://www.coe.int/en/web/artificial-intelligence/the-framework-convention-on-artificial-intelligence.

[13] Artificial Intelligence Act, arts. 27, 48 and 95 (2) (e); and Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, arts. 10 and 11.

[14] See https://achpr.au.int/en/documents/2025-04-08/draft-study-human-peoples-rights-artificial-intelligence-robotics.

[15] See https://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/Interamerican%20Model%20Law%20Gender%20based%20Digital%20Violence%201.pdf.

integrating gender-responsiveness and ethical considerations into technical standards for AI systems.[16] These regional efforts reflect growing recognition of the gendered dimensions of AI, but they remain fragmented and uneven.

15. Large technology companies have simultaneously been granted broad discretion in determining approaches to AI design, development, use and transfer. While some companies have expressed support for transparency, fairness, privacy and accountability, including commitments to addressing gender inequality, the way in which they implement these stated values and collect, use and implement user data remains opaque and largely unverifiable. There is no evidence that technology companies are systematically engaging with affected communities or integrating feminist approaches throughout AI life cycles. Some participate in the B-Tech Project of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which supports the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, although implementation lags well behind what is required.[17]

16. Within the United Nations system, there has been growing engagement with AI governance. Special procedure mandate holders have examined the effects of AI on other human rights, such as freedom of expression, freedom from racial discrimination, freedom from poverty, freedom from violence, cultural rights, the right to peaceful assembly and association and the right to health.[18] The Human Rights Council and General Assembly have repeatedly acknowledged the impact of digital technologies, including AI, on human rights.[19] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has produced recommendations, including a dedicated section on gender, although these recommendations lack binding force.[20] The General Assembly and the Secretariat have also supported efforts such as the Global Digital Compact and High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, establishing an independent scientific panel to facilitate global dialogue.[21] These efforts are important foundations, but there have been no coordinated efforts to produce the binding, gender-responsive standards that the moment demands.

17. Regulation of AI is necessary and urgent. As this report documents, harms are not prospective. Around the world, women and girls are already experiencing and responding to them. AI governance can only become gender-responsive if it is grounded in the principles of inclusion, meaningful participation, accountability, substantive equality, transparency and oversight.

III. Preconditions for gender-equal digital futures

18. True substantive gender equality in the digital age depends on equal access to technology and the proactive elimination of its impact on existing and emerging disparities across economic, social and political life.[22] State obligations to ensure women's equal enjoyment of their human rights extend to private actors within their jurisdiction, as outlined above. Based on extensive consultation and research, the Working Group identifies in the present section the preconditions to such equality, including immediate and deliberate measures that States must take to address systemic disparities in healthcare, social protection, employment and justice. Each is necessary to ensure that AI and digital technologies advance, rather than compromise, the human rights of women and girls.

[16] See https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/2517467_E_PDF_WEB_updated.pdf.
[17] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/business-and-human-rights/b-tech-project.
[18] See A/74/493, A/80/278, A/HRC/38/47, A/HRC/41/41 A/HRC/53/65 and A/HRC/56/68. See also https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/expression/statements/2025-10-24-joint-declaration-artificial-intelligence.pdf.
[19] See, for example, Human Rights Council resolution 59/11.
[20] See https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381137.
[21] See General Assembly resolution 79/325, https://www.un.org/global-dialogue-ai-governance/en and https://www.un.org/digital-emerging-technologies/ai-advisory-body.
[22] The importance of the preconditions was reinforced in all regional consultations.

A. Equal access to technology

19. An intersectional and gender-responsive approach to closing the digital divide is the first precondition to ensuring that AI does not entrench existing structural inequalities that underpin gender-based discrimination. All of the regional consultations for the report have shown that the development and deployment of AI is occurring in contexts where the gender digital divide has already resulted in unequal access to the Internet and digital technologies, intensifying the exclusion of women and girls from access to information, education, economic opportunities and other features of development. This divide is compounded for those living in rural areas, with low incomes or low socioeconomic status, older women and those belonging to minority and historically marginalized groups.[23] Absent concerted efforts to address this divide, the integration of AI into essential services and decision-making systems risks deepening existing inequalities across all areas of life.[24]

20. States can address these risks through a holistic approach to Internet access that provides for meaningful community-centred connectivity,[25] encompassing affordability, reliability and quality of access and shaped by the broader enabling environment, including infrastructure and reliable electricity provision.[26] This must be paired with addressing the gendered digital skill gaps and discriminatory sociocultural norms.[27] For example, the Working Group's global consultation with young women and girls revealed that girls often had later access to digital technologies and AI than boys, especially in rural and low-income areas; lacked the support needed to use such tools safely; encountered embedded biases, including male-default outputs, and stereotypical representations; and experienced the exclusion of their lived realities, particularly for girls out of school or girls with disabilities.

B. Women's and girls' economic, social and cultural rights and technology

21. The second precondition is ensuring that AI and related digital technologies enable the exercise by women and girls of their economic, social and cultural rights. The most persistent barriers to gender equality include unequal economic participation and limited access to resources and safety nets. This precondition is therefore necessary to ensure that AI does not further entrench structural inequality. The rapid proliferation of AI tools has raised serious concerns about gendered labour exploitation.[28] The deployment of AI depends, in a significant part, on the underpaid, unrecognized labour of countless women and girls engaged in data work, particularly across Africa and Asia. These workers are frequently exposed to traumatic and graphic content under exploitative labour conditions.[29]

22. This dynamic reflects a broader trend often referred to as "digital colonialism", whereby the exploitation of labour, including women's and girls' labour, in the global majority fuels technological development and economic growth in the global minority.[30] At the same time, women and girls remain disproportionately vulnerable to job displacement by AI and other technologies, especially in women-dominated sectors such as health and care, business administration and clerical support.[31]

23. With gender impact assessments and meaningful regulation, however, AI can enhance women's and girls' access to economic opportunities and social services, advancing multiple

[23] A/HRC/53/39, para. 40.
[24] In addition, the regional consultations with Asia and the Pacific included discussions of the fact that even in States where national identity laws allow changes to gender markers, that recognition does not always extend to other welfare platforms now using AI.
[25] See https://www.apc.org/en/glossary/meaningful-community-centred-connectivity.
[26] See https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2025/10/what-is-meaningful-connectivity/.
[27] See https://data.unicef.org/resources/ictgenderdivide/.
[28] See A/HRC/44/51.
[29] A/78/161, para. 9. See also submission by Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law.
[30] Regional consultations with Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa.
[31] International Labour Organization, "Gen AI, occupational segregation and gender equality in the world of work", research brief, March 2026, pp. 5 and 6.

rights under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (art. 2), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (arts. 2, 6, 12 and 13), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (arts. 1–3, 5, 11 and 12)[32] and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (arts. 9 and 27). AI can, for example, expand financial inclusion,[33] support navigation of employment processes – including for women with disabilities[34] – connect women to new markets and widen access to banking, investment and money-management tools. AI-driven automation also holds potential to reduce labour-intensive unpaid care and support work and to increase the autonomy of those who require care and support.[35] Due attention should be paid to ensuring that this does not dehumanize caregiving.[36] AI tools can expand access to education through generative research, language learning and personalized feedback and lessons.[37] However, this use is not without risk: biased algorithms can steer women and girls toward education and employment outcomes that replicate gendered discrimination, such as AI tutors discouraging girls from studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics and the gender stereotyping of certain professions.[38]

24. AI and digital technologies can be particularly effective in addressing barriers to women's and girls' access to health, including through improved diagnosis, interventions and expanded access to medical information and telemedicine, particularly in rural, fragile or conflict-afflicted settings or in areas with limited access to resources.[39] Given that more women and girls are likely to be misdiagnosed or to have symptoms dismissed, such technologies hold real potential to bridge long-standing disparities and improve quality of life where healthcare is otherwise unavailable.[40]

25. Realizing these benefits requires that AI language models be trained on underrepresented and Indigenous languages to ensure that all women and girls, not just those who speak dominant languages, are able to have access to and benefit from such technologies.[41] Such training of AI language models is also essential to ensure the inclusion of the diversity of sources of knowledge and culture, including traditional knowledge, secure the intellectual property rights of all cultural bearers and protect against cultural erasure and convergence, which amplifies dominant, uniform images and voices and risks homogenization.[42]

C. Women's and girls' equal and meaningful participation and leadership in public and political life

26. The third precondition is ensuring that AI facilitates, rather than undermines, women's and girls' equal participation in public and political life, a right firmly grounded in

[32] See also general recommendation No. 28 (2010), paras. 9 and 10.
[33] A/HRC/44/51, paras. 22 and 23.
[34] Consultations with young women and girls.
[35] A/HRC/58/33, para. 51.
[36] A/HRC/36/48, para. 47; and A/HRC/59/45, para. 5.
[37] Consultations with young women and girls.
[38] Regional consultations with Middle East and North Africa and West and Central Africa, and consultations with young women and girls. See also https://achpr.au.int/en/documents/2025-04-08/draft-study-human-peoples-rights-artificial-intelligence-robotics.
[39] Regional consultations with Middle East and North Africa and West and Central Africa.
[40] See submission by Uzbekistan. See also Maya Dusenbery, *Doing Harm: The Truth About How Bad Medicine and Lazy Science Leave Women Dismissed, Misdiagnosed, and Sick* (San Francisco, HarperOne, 2019).
[41] Regional consultations with Africa, Middle East and North Africa, West and Central Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. See also Yolanda Botti-Lodovico, "Against all odds: increasing African women's influence on AI innovation and policy", Tech Policy Press, 31 October 2024; Mia Marzotto, "The latest from TWB's language technology initiative", Translators without Borders, 13 July 2020; and https://www.policylab.tech/_files/ugd/0e03be_3d496084e8dc409087c3da2597b65c14.pdf (in Spanish).
[42] A/HRC/58/60, para. 43. See also https://www.cell.com/patterns/fulltext/S2666-3899(25)00299-5?_returnURL=https%3A%2F%2Flinkinghub.elsevier.com%2Fretrieve%2Fpii%2FS2666389925002995%3Fshowall%3Dtrue and https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381137.

international human rights law, including under articles 7, 8, 13 and 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As civic engagement and political discourse increasingly migrate to digital spaces, the ability to speak, organize and advocate online has become essential; without it, women and girls are effectively excluded from the arenas in which influence and power are exercised and futures are shaped. The Working Group has previously reported on the contemporary threats of technology, including AI, to women's political, economic, social, and cultural rights, particularly women's rights to be elected and hold political office, women's right to work amid technological and demographic changes[43] and structural barriers to girls' and young women's participation in activism.[44]

27. When designed and adopted without recognition of gendered risks, AI tools can become significant obstacles to women's and girls' full participation in public life, introducing forms of exclusion and risk across political, civic and economic spheres.[45] The convergence of technologies such as spyware with AI is becoming an omnipresent risk for women activists, civil society and human rights defenders.[46] When adopted in these ways, AI impedes women's full realization of their rights as guaranteed under international law, contrary to the obligations referred to above.

28. This is not a speculative risk. AI-enabled abuse is already reshaping women's and girls' participation in public life. Women politicians are targeted through technology-facilitated gender-based violence and disinformation that seeks to shame, discredit, and silence them. Three quarters of women journalists surveyed by UNESCO have experienced online violence, resulting in self-censorship, mental health issues, and, for one in four, offline attacks.[47] This abuse unfolds against a backdrop of women and girls withdrawing from public and cultural life in response to online harassment,[48] a trend exacerbated by the rise in "manosphere" culture, characterized by rigid masculine norms that emphasize dominance and intersect with rising issues of social stress, depression and distrust of institutions among young men in particular.[49]

29. The impact of AI tools extends far beyond public figures. AI tools that can spread discrimination, disseminate threats, sow confusion and exacerbate digital divides that threaten women's voting rights have been well documented, including by the United Nations.[50] AI is also increasingly being used to regulate voting. A 2024 survey of African countries found that a number are using AI tools for voter authentication and registration,[51] posing serious risks of disenfranchising women, especially rural women, who are less likely than men to have access to the Internet and devices and digital literacy skills.[52]

30. These challenges demand urgent attention and deliberate reform of how AI tools are developed, deployed and governed. The protection of women's political rights and girls' right to participation is a core obligation of States under international human rights law.[53] That obligation cannot be delegated to or replaced by voluntary action by private actors. When designed, regulated and applied responsibly, AI products can be used to create new opportunities for communication, connection and exchange. In India, attempts are being

[43] A/HRC/44/51, para. 19.
[44] A/HRC/50/25, para. 9.
[45] Regional consultations with Middle East and North Africa, West and Central Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.
[46] See, for example, concerns expressed in communications OTH 62/2023 and ISR 11/2021. All communications mentioned in the present report are available from https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments.
[47] See https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383788.
[48] Plan International, Inc., *The Truth Gap: The State of the World's Girls 2021* (Woking, 2021), p. 26.
[49] Discussed during the regional consultations with Western Europe and others.
[50] See https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/governing_ai_for_humanity_final_report_en.pdf.
[51] See https://www.idea.int/news/artificial-intelligence-and-integrity-african-elections.
[52] Regional consultations with Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.
[53] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 1, 3 and 26; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, art. 7; and Convention on the Rights of the Child, arts. 12 and 15.

made to democratize access to AI literacy,[54] and in Nigeria, platforms are being used with the aim of providing a virtual market for small-scale vendors where women users are already outnumbering men by three to one.[55] AI-powered information verification can improve the quality of public discourse and counter discriminatory misinformation: Code4Africa, for example, has used AI-driven tools to track gender representation in the media, map online hate speech, especially against women leaders and politicians, and identify misinformation that harms women, in the areas of health, safety and leadership.[56] Real-time translation and other accessibility tools can expand reach and enable women to build, scale up and share their ideas, particularly benefiting women with fewer resources and less access to global audiences. Because AI technologies can be leveraged from home, they may be especially transformative for women and girls who face barriers to or risks in engaging physically in public and political life.[57]

31. Moreover, women's access to justice and accountability can also be enhanced through AI, which can support the strengthening of justice mechanisms at all levels, by, for instance, improving public access to legal knowledge and litigants' access to appropriate resources and counsel. For example, the Instituto Mexicano de Derechos Humanos y Democracia (Mexican Institute for Human Rights and Democracy) has developed an AI agent that reviews criminal proceedings and sentences in cases of violence against women and girls for human rights issues, with a view to verifying whether the proceedings complied with the rights of victims and applied a gender perspective, and identifying possible cases of discrimination.[58] Other examples of such initiatives include tools such as Safe YOU and HerSafeSpace,[59] which provide survivor-centred access to emergency assistance and other support services. These tools can also support the monitoring, mapping and analysis of patterns of human rights abuses or harms that affect women and girls.[60] This usage is demonstrated in the work of organizations such as Ushahidi in Kenya, WITNESS Africa and Zindi in Zimbabwe, which offer resources including user-generated activism maps and guidance for communities to respond to and mitigate the harmful impact of generative AI. In doing so, AI can support the disaggregation of human rights data and improve understanding of the impact of violations not only on women broadly, but on specific communities of women.[61]

32. These possibilities underscore both the urgent need and genuine potential for States to establish regulatory frameworks, oversight mechanisms and public-interest infrastructure that ensure AI supports, rather than suppresses, women's and girls' full and equal participation in public life.

IV. Gender equality and artificial intelligence redlines

33. There has been a growing global call to establish AI redlines: that is, unacceptable risks in the development, deployment and use of AI that are in need of urgent intervention.[62] It is critical that gender equality and the rights of women and girls are fully integrated into these discussions. The present section highlights the gendered dimensions of issues that have come to the forefront of the debate on AI redlines, including in the use of AI in armed conflict, mass surveillance and infringement of privacy, the environmental impact of AI and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. This list of issues is not exhaustive, and refers

[54] See https://www.futureskillsprime.in/course/yuva-ai-for-all/.
[55] See https://www.bii.co.uk/en/news-insight/insight/articles/what-does-impact-mean-to-people-reached-by-our-investment/#:~:text=Impact=%20more%20inclusive%20business%20models,%5D%20to%20support%20my%20family.%E2%80%9D.
[56] See https://codeforafrica.org/.
[57] See A/HRC/50/25.
[58] See submissions by Mexico City Human Rights Commission and Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative.
[59] See https://safeyou.space/en and https://hersafespace-gbv.org/about.html.
[60] See https://www.lawyershub.org/news/post/the-role-of-ai-in-preventing-monitoring-human-rights-abuses-during-electoral-processes-in-africa.
[61] See https://geneva-academy.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/GHRP-AI-Decoded.pdf.
[62] See https://red-lines.ai/.

to a range of uses of AI that should be prohibited entirely and others that require regulation and oversight. Failure to embed a gender-responsive understanding of potential proscriptions in AI, and to develop redlines focused on women's and girls' rights, will have devastating consequences, compounding harms already being experienced while generating new threats to women and girls.

A. Gendered toll of artificial intelligence during armed conflict

34. The use of AI is reshaping the conduct, scale and consequences of armed conflict, with profoundly harmful implications for gender equality and the rights of women and girls. As States and non-State actors deploy AI in weapons systems, military planning, surveillance and information operations, these technologies risk intensifying pre-existing patterns of militarization, gender-based discrimination and vulnerability. While AI may offer potential benefits for gender-responsive humanitarian intervention and post-conflict accountability, its rapid militarization – combined with weak regulation, opaque design and entrenched algorithmic bias – threatens to erode core protections under international humanitarian law and human rights law. The Working Group is deeply concerned that AI is being deployed in armed conflict without adequate regulation, safeguards or meaningful gender analysis, and that its harmful and discriminatory impact falls disproportionately on women and girls, including through the subsequent militarization of domestic law enforcement spaces.

35. Weaponized AI has expanded and accelerated conflict, introducing unprecedented risks to civilians and amplification of gendered harm.[63] Lethal autonomous weapons, which use AI to select and engage targets without requiring human intervention after activation, represent the most urgent conflict-related threat posed by AI.[64] These systems exponentially magnify the lethality of warfare, reinforce gender-based power imbalances and threaten the legal and moral foundations of the international order.[65] Their deployment has been linked to heightened collateral harm to women and children, in contravention of the international humanitarian law requirements of distinction, proportionality, military necessity and meaningful human control.[66] The unpredictability and remote nature of these weapons, including AI-powered stalker drones, intensify fear and trauma while restricting women's and girls' freedom of movement, cutting off access to vital services and increasing risks of domestic or intimate partner violence.[67] These risks are compounded for women of colour and women with disabilities, who face a heightened risk of misrecognition and misclassification by AI-enabled weapons systems.[68]

36. Unlike other applications of AI, the catastrophic potential of fully autonomous weapons cannot be controlled through regulation alone. The opacity of AI decision-making is incompatible with the context-specific judgment required to comply with international humanitarian law and further impedes justice and accountability.[69] The Working Group emphasizes the extreme risks posed by fully autonomous weapons to women and girls in conflict-affected settings and joins the international call for a comprehensive ban of such weapons.[70]

[63] S/2025/556, para. 50.

[64] See concerns expressed in communication ISR 25/2025.

[65] See submission by Ombudsman's Office of Colombia, and https://unidir.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/UNIDR_Gender_Lethal_Autonomous_Weapons_Systems_LAWS_Factsheet.pdf.

[66] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 2, 6 and 17; and Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), art. 51 (5) (b). See also A/79/88, para. 46; and CCW/GGE.1/2024/WP.4.

[67] See https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/9373-conflict-and-domestic-turmoil-a-review-of-intimate-partner-violence-in-conflict-settings.pdf.

[68] A/79/88, annex I, p. 60; and Ana Beduschi, "Harnessing the potential of artificial intelligence for humanitarian action: opportunities and risks", *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 919, June 2022.

[69] See submission by Stop Killer Robots.

[70] A/79/88, paras. 74–77; and CCW/GGE.1/2024/WP.5, para. 11. See also https://automatedresearch.org/state-positions/.

37. The threats to women's and girls' rights posed by AI extend beyond the enabling of fully autonomous weapons. AI also enables expanded surveillance, targeted harassment and weaponized disinformation that exacerbates armed conflict, generating a disproportionate impact on women and girls. States increasingly deploy AI-driven tools, such as facial recognition technology and predictive behaviour modelling, to monitor their populations and to repress dissent before, during and after armed conflict.[71] Generative AI technologies and other forms of digital violence, such as doxing, have been weaponized to target and silence women journalists, human rights defenders, peacebuilders and survivors of sexual violence and abuse.[72] Disinformation, including AI-generated deepfakes, is further used to incite violence, stoke intergroup tensions and blackmail survivors and families.[73]

38. The harmful effects reflect choices by States, companies and the international community. Deployed responsibly and with attention to algorithmic bias, AI could complement efforts to strengthen relief, recovery and accountability for violations of the rights of women and girls in conflict settings.[74] AI tools can support anticipatory humanitarian responses that meet the needs of women and girls, who are more likely to die from secondary effects of war than direct violence.[75] Automated chatbots have been adopted to provide guidance on aid provision and to provide survivors of sexual violence with access to information and reporting without fear of stigmatization,[76] and AI is increasingly being applied to document war crimes and estimate violations in remote or otherwise inaccessible areas.

39. However, incomplete and biased data, lack of regulation, violations of the right to privacy and insufficient safeguards against malicious use continue to threaten the potential of these applications for women and girls.[77] For instance, the growing reliance on automated documentation of war crimes risks obscuring gendered patterns of harms by privileging highly visible violations such as the destruction of infrastructure. Women and girls may also struggle to gain access to digital applications and services, particularly amid conflict-related Internet blockades, electricity blackouts and sanctions.

40. Crucially, AI cannot deliver gendered peace, replace institutional accountability or dismantle structural patterns of violence and militarization. There remains an urgent need to ban fully autonomous weapons and to regulate all AI-enabled military systems through binding international standards that ensure meaningful human control, civilian protection and gender-responsive oversight.

B. Artificial intelligence and its gendered environmental impact

41. The development, training and deployment of AI systems are generating significant environmental costs that exacerbate global climate change,[78] including the vast consumption of water for the construction and operation of data centres, increased carbon

[71] See A/78/520.
[72] See submission by Women in Media (Ukraine).
[73] S/2024/671, para. 85; S/2025/556, para. 16; and regional consultations with Middle East and North Africa, West and Central Africa and Asia and the Pacific.
[74] Regional consultations with Asia and the Pacific.
[75] See https://www.preventionweb.net/news/mitigating-gender-based-violence-risks-how-anticipatory-action-supports-safety-and-access.
[76] Regional consultations with Middle East and North Africa and West and Central Africa. See https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/5/feature-using-ai-in-accessing-justice-for-survivors-of-violence.
[77] Regional consultations with Middle East and North Africa and West and Central Africa. See concerns expressed in communication SDN 6/2022. See also Alexa Koenig and Ulic Egan, "Hiding in plain site: using online open-source information to investigate sexual violence and gender-based crimes", in *Technologies of Human Rights Representation*, Alexandra S. Moore and James Dawes, eds. (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2022).
[78] See United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 7/9 of 12 December 2025.

emissions and a substantial rise in electronic waste.[79] These environmental harms, and their consequences, fall disproportionately upon women and girls.

42. The acceleration of climate change by AI is deepening existing structural forms of gender discrimination and inequality. Women and girls represent up to 80 per cent of those displaced by climate change and natural disasters and are 14 times more likely to die in the aftermath of a natural disaster.[80] Climate-induced disasters further give rise to heightened levels of gender-based violence, increased rates of child marriage and deteriorating sexual, reproductive and maternal health outcomes.[81] The Working Group has received information from women-led organizations and women environmental defenders documenting the use of AI by State and non-State actors to amplify and accelerate the spread of misinformation and technology-facilitated gender-based violence directed against women environmental defenders.[82]

43. One of the most acute gendered costs of AI arises from the intersection of AI-driven water consumption and existing water scarcity. An estimated 9.5 per cent of the women and girls globally reside in countries experiencing high or critical water stress.[83] Further strain on water supplies threatens local food security, undermining agricultural yields, household food supplies and socioeconomic stability.[84] Women and girls bear a disproportionate burden of food and water scarcity; women and girls experiencing drought, for example, are compelled to spend more time collecting water, with corresponding reductions in time available for education and economic participation.[85]

44. These effects disproportionately fall upon women and girls in the global majority. A high concentration of data centres are being constructed in drought-affected global-majority communities, often without the consent of and despite protests by local populations.[86] In sub-Saharan Africa, reduced access to water for agricultural purposes has forced some women to seek alternative livelihoods, which has increased their vulnerability to sexual exploitation.[87] Indigenous women and girls whose lands and resources are directly affected are among the most likely to experience the most severe impact of AI-induced environmental degradation, including targeting, intimidation or harassment for their activism, protest and legal challenges.

45. In the light of the harms caused by the unchecked proliferation of AI data centres, the Working Group joins the call by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation for a moratorium on the development of data centres and for greater transparency on the harmful impact of existing centres,[88] including information assessing the gendered impact.

46. Current frameworks for AI data governance do not adequately capture the gender-differentiated climate effects of AI systems, and thereby seriously constrain effective intervention or prevention. At the foundation of climate-responsive AI systems lies a critical absence of gender-disaggregated environmental data, compounded by a broader lack of regulatory standards or oversight mechanisms guiding how States should identify, prevent

[79] See Peng Wang and others, "E-waste challenges of generative artificial intelligence", *Natural Computational Science,* vol. 4, No. 11 (November 2024); and Casey Crownhart, "AI will add to the e-waste problem: here's what we can do about it", MIT Technology Review, 28 October 2024.

[80] See https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/women-science-not-silence-pioneering-change-global-climate-crisis.

[81] See https://www.unfpa.org/news/five-ways-climate-change-hurts-women-and-girls.

[82] See submission by Fundación Multitudes.

[83] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/from-commodity-to-common-good-a-feminist-agenda-to-tackle-the-worlds-water-crisis-2-page-spread-en.pdf.

[84] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/feminist-climate-justice-a-framework-for-action-overview-en.pdf.

[85] See ibid. and https:/www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/66/EGM/Expert%20Papers/Erika%20RAMOS_CSW66%20Expert%20Paper.pdf.

[86] Regional consultations with Latin America and the Caribbean.

[87] Regional consultations with Africa.

[88] See A/HRC/60/30.

and respond to gender-differentiated climate effects.[89] As the Technology Executive Committee of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has demonstrated, AI systems designed to model or mitigate climate risks that are built on incomplete or biased data produce tools that replicate and reinforce exclusion.[90] The Working Group cautions that where predictive and mitigative systems fail to account for women's heightened vulnerability to climate change, they perpetuate a cycle in which women remain invisible in both technological design and climate governance, bearing the brunt of environmental degradation while being systematically excluded from the digital decision-making processes that shape efforts seeking to remediate it.

47. When designed and deployed responsibly, however, AI tools may support holistic strategies for climate resilience[91] and gender equality. AI-powered satellite monitoring has strengthened women-led community initiatives that track deforestation in the Amazon, empowering local climate stewardship.[92] AI and digital technologies can also be harnessed to identify infrastructure gaps and inform the design of systems resilient to climate change and natural disasters. Where grounded in gender-inclusive design and governance, AI-driven early warning systems can strengthen women's access to timely disaster information, allowing for quicker evacuation decisions and better coordination of household and community resources.[93]

C. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination

48. As digital technologies and AI tools increasingly mediate social interaction and public discourse, technology-facilitated gender-based violence has become a central threat to women's and girls' rights. Over the past decade, multiple United Nations bodies have identified its proliferation to endemic levels.[94] In 2024, UNESCO found that 58 per cent of women and girls have experienced online harassment.[95]

49. The Working Group stresses that technology-facilitated gender-based violence is not an isolated set of online abuses but a structural tool of discrimination that restricts women's and girls' participation in public, political and civic life. Virtual violence often mirrors and amplifies patterns of violence and repression in physical public spaces.[96] By driving women and girls out of digital spaces, technology-facilitated gender-based violence entrenches inequality, undermines autonomy and weakens the conditions necessary for inclusive democratic engagement, threatening their human rights in contradiction with the requirements of article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.[97] The impact of such violence extends far beyond individual harm, shaping who can speak, lead and be heard. Without the requisite interventions, this harm promises to grow over time, as digital platforms become ever more central to public participation. Moreover, because the private sector lacks an inherent incentive to address these discriminatory harms,

[89] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Policy-brief-Gender-and-age-inequality-of-disaster-risk-en.pdf.

[90] See https://unfccc.int/ttclear/tec/AI4climate.html.

[91] See https://www.unesco.org/ethics-ai/en/articles/how-ai-policy-can-accelerate-climate-action.

[92] See Christina Fernández Aguilar, "Betty Rubio, the tech-savvy Kichwa leader defending threatened territory", Mongabay, 10 December 2021.

[93] See Ashfaq Ahmad Shah and others, "Gender perspective of flood early warning systems: people-centered approach", *Water*, vol. 14, No. 14 (July 2022); and Grey Nearing and others, "Global prediction of extreme floods in ungauged watersheds", *Nature*, vol. 627, No. 8004 (21 March 2024).

[94] A/61/122/Add.1 and A/61/122/Add.1/Corr.1, para. 105; A/77/302, paras. 4 and 7; and A/79/500, para. 4.

[95] See UNESCO, *Red Teaming Artificial Intelligence for Social Good: The Playbook* (Paris, 2025).

[96] See Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 35 (2017). See also Shahrazad Odeh, "A violent network: gender-based violence against Palestinian women in virtual space", 7amleh – The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media, November 2018.

[97] See also Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 35 (2017).

a profound governance gap has emerged which poses a serious threat to the human rights of women and girls. The Working Group thus emphasizes that without urgent action by States to ensure the equal participation of women and girls online, freedom of expression and meaningful democratic deliberation will continue to erode.

50. Despite the global and increasing prevalence of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and notwithstanding the emergence of nascent regional instruments,[98] many States lack adequate legal or technical frameworks to address these new forms of digital violence.[99] Less than 40 per cent of States have legal protection against technology-facilitated gender-based violence,[100] and survivors face barriers to reporting, investigation and remedy.[101] For example, police may be uninformed about new criminal offences designed to accommodate forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and may try to fit cases within traditional criteria of domestic violence.[102] Public prosecutors, judges and social workers may require special training to recognize forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including those enabled by AI, such as deepfakes and non-consensual intimate image abuse.[103] Law enforcement departments may lack the technical equipment necessary to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence, such as tools related to the gathering of electronic evidence.[104] States also fail to consider historical, contextual and culturally grounded understandings of non-consensual intimate image abuse in legal reform efforts. Nudity-focused definitions of intimacy may fail to capture the harms affecting women and gender-diverse people in some communities,[105] and existing colonial-era laws on indecent exposure, which penalize women and girls whose images are non-consensually shared, further discourages them from reporting the abuse.[106]

51. Data on and documentation of technology-facilitated gender-based violence remains uneven. There are major gaps concerning women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including migrants, refugees, LGBTIQ+ persons and those from rural areas or racial or religious minority backgrounds, as well as significant regional gaps.[107] As legal frameworks are incomplete or fragmented, States often fail to collect standardized and disaggregated data on the prevalence of technology-facilitated gender-based violence.[108] Technology companies hold data concerning incidents and moderation, yet very few publish disaggregated metrics or make data sets available for research, and their definitions and moderation practices vary widely.[109] Social barriers exacerbate these gaps: for example, there is underreporting by marginalized groups due to stigmatization, lack of awareness of what constitutes technology-facilitated gender-based violence, language or digital barriers, lack of remedy,[110] fear of retaliation[111] and distrust of justice systems.

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98 See, for example, https://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/LeyModeloViolenciaPolitica-EN.pdf, https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/522-resolution-protection-women-against-digital-violence-africa-achpr and https://rm.coe.int/grevio-rec-no-on-digital-violence-against-women/1680a49147.

99 Regional consultations with Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia and the Pacific.

100 See https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2025/11/digital-violence-is-intensifying-yet-nearly-half-of-the-worlds-women-and-girls-lack-legal-protection-from-digital-abuse.

101 See United Nations Development Programme, *Analysis of the Legislation Related to Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence* (2024).

102 Ibid., p. 48.

103 Ibid., pp. 50 and 51.

104 Ibid., p. 49.

105 See submission by Chayn.

106 See Sarai Chisala-Tempelhoff and Monica Twesiime Kirya, “Gender, law and revenge porn in sub-Saharan Africa: a review of Malawi and Uganda”, *Palgrave Communications*, vol. 2, article No. 16069 (2016).

107 See https://www.svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2018-07-24/ICRW_TFGBVMarketing_Brief_v8-Web.pdf.

108 See https://www.unfpa.org/publications/measuring-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-discussion-paper.

109 See https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/GBV-TechnologyFacilitated_11JAN24.pdf.

110 Regional consultations with Africa.

111 Regional consultations with Eastern Europe.

52. The absence of a comprehensive global understanding of the landscape of technology-facilitated gender-based violence has hampered effective and coordinated intervention. Protectionist or punitive approaches that focus narrowly on legal or criminal consequences, without attention to the underlying goals and impact of that violence, risk being both misguided and disempowering for women and girls. Interventions designed solely to shield women and girls from online harm, without the parallel aim of ensuring that they can fully inhabit and lead in digital spaces, may inadvertently reinforce their exclusion. Effective interventions must therefore pursue two goals simultaneously: preventing online gender-based violence and ensuring accountability for it, while actively building digital communities in which women and girls can participate, speak and lead on equal terms.

D. Digital governance, mass surveillance and the right of women and girls to privacy

53. The erosion of privacy in digital and AI-enabled environments has had a uniquely gendered impact, exposing women and girls to heightened risks of surveillance, control and harm. While international human rights law protects privacy, freedom of expression, equality before the law, political participation and effective remedy, implementation and application of existing privacy frameworks have not kept pace with technological change, leaving individuals with significantly weaker protections than in the predigital era.[112] For women and girls, these gaps directly threaten autonomy and equality and compound other forms of gender-based discrimination.

54. While AI-powered applications may provide women and girls with valuable tools for health tracking, education and business, they typically rely on the collection of vast amounts of personal, sensitive data, encompassing data on behaviour, demographic information, gender identity, religious affiliation, health data, relationship status and sexual orientation.[113] The absence of transparency, of meaningful informed consent and of adequate regulation undermines women's agency over their personal information and digital identities and can threaten their safety and livelihoods.[114] Without immediate regulatory intervention, these tools will continue to erode the digital and bodily autonomy and equality of women and girls.

55. Of particular concern are AI-facilitated surveillance technologies that are weaponized to target women and girls who do not conform to patriarchal gender norms with regard to dress codes expression or public or political engagement. States frequently deploy such technologies, including AI-driven biometrics,[115] facial recognition technology[116] and spyware,[117] under the guise of national security[118] and morality enforcement.[119] Private actors, with unprecedented access to sensitive data, further enable this weaponization by selling data to Governments and private defence corporations.[120]

[112] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 2, 3, 17, 19, 25 and 26.
[113] General Assembly resolution 75/176, preamble (p. 4).
[114] Submission by Tattle.
[115] In all regional consultations, concern was articulated over AI processing of biometric information.
[116] See concerns expressed in communication IRL 3/2022; and A/HRC/46/56.
[117] For example, it was reported in the regional consultations with Eastern Europe that NSO Group's spyware technology Pegasus was being used by Governments against human rights defenders. See also concerns expressed in communication SRB 1/2025, A/HRC/52/39 and https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/terrorism/sr/2022-12-15/position-paper-unsrct-on-global-regulation-ct-spyware-technology-trade.pdf.
[118] It was reported in the regional consultations with Western Europe and others that national security was being used to circumvent the progress made towards banning technologies whose purpose contravened widely accepted principles of international law.
[119] See https://oecd.ai/en/incidents/2023-01-10-6a41.
[120] It was reported in the regional consultations with Western Europe and others that civilian data was repurposed by companies building commercial and military AI systems.

56. Women marginalized on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity or socioeconomic status face heightened digital surveillance.[121] Black and Brown women, including women of African descent,[122] Indigenous women, Muslim women[123] and migrant women[124] are disproportionately monitored and policed, as AI systems amplify stereotypes that portray certain women as criminalized, masculinized or aggressive. Access to digital technologies can itself be weaponized, by being withheld to impede communication, information-sharing and documentation, a pattern often observed in armed conflict or under autocratic regimes.

57. Safeguarding human rights in the digital age requires that the use of AI and digital technologies be guided by principles of digital autonomy and participatory governance. The Working Group echoes the assertion by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights that communities whose heritage is digitized should retain control over their cultural data and be involved in further digitalization processes, while still allowing for open access to digital cultural heritage.[125] This is especially urgent for Indigenous women and girls, whose data must be collected, processed and utilized only with their meaningful informed consent and in accordance with their right to self-determination.[126]

58. When State and non-State actors deploy these technologies in ways that undermine the rights of women and girls to privacy, freedom of movement, freedom of expression or participation in public life, any justifications rooted in security, efficiency and administrative convenience must be critically assessed and scrutinized. The Working Group is unequivocal: there is no justification for the use of such technologies for mass surveillance and suppression of women and girls. Such uses cannot be justified under the strict tests of legality, necessity and proportionality and must be categorically prohibited in line with the requirements of international law, including articles 2, 17 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

59. **AI and related digital technologies are reshaping the conditions under which women and girls exercise their human rights, often in ways that entrench discrimination, exclude marginalized groups and amplify existing power asymmetries. While AI holds the potential to advance gender equality, such benefits will not be realized in the absence of deliberate, rights-based, feminist and gender-responsive regulation and governance. International human rights law establishes obligations, yet persistent gaps in global regulation and technical standards have allowed systemic failures of accountability to persist. Closing those gaps – and ensuring that technological development serves rather than undermines the realization of human rights for all – is not a future aspiration. It is a present obligation.**

[121] The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance has described the international human rights framework applicable to technology, AI and racial discrimination (A/HRC/56/68, paras. 59–65).

[122] A/HRC/57/70, para. 29.

[123] See concerns expressed in communication CHN 14/2020 and https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ohchr-assessment-human-rights-concerns-xinjiang-uyghur-autonomous-region.

[124] A/75/590, paras. 9 and 19. It was reported in the regional consultations with Eastern Europe that border use of AI-enabled technology to gather sensitive information on migrants was possible without knowledge or consent and was driving women and girls to migrate via more dangerous routes.

[125] A/HRC/58/60, para. 54.

[126] A/HRC/EMRIP/2025/2, para. 93. Participants at the regional consultations with Latin America and the Caribbean reported that Indigenous Peoples struggled to access culturally relevant data, even while data were continuously gathered on their communities without their knowledge and consent. See also https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387814 (in Spanish).

60. **The Working Group calls on States and all stakeholders to prioritize a substantive gender-equality approach to the digital space, strengthening multilateral cooperation while urgently addressing harms from rapidly developing technologies, including AI.**

61. **The Working Group recommends that States:**

(a) **Promote equitable access to AI and digital technologies, guaranteeing affordable and reliable Internet connectivity and recognizing it as a public good; and ensure that access is supported by inclusive, community-driven and gender-sensitive measures, including by monitoring and addressing gendered disparities through the collection of disaggregated and intersectional data and their integration into national AI strategies and digital policies;**

(b) **Ensure that all governance of AI is grounded in human rights law and feminist principles that advance substantive gender equality, integrating these approaches throughout the AI life cycle and ensuring women's equal participation and leadership and the meaningful involvement of affected groups, particularly marginalized communities, including by establishing clear institutional processes and standards for the systematic integration of human rights and feminist approaches into AI legislation and regulation, requiring gender-responsive human rights due diligence by AI developers and technology companies, strengthening oversight by providing adequate resources and independent oversight that includes enforcement of equality and non-discrimination, and safeguarding civil society engagement, including through political, financial and institutional support to women-led and girl-led organizations and women human rights defenders;**

(c) **Immediately cease the development and deployment of all lethal autonomous weapons systems, urgently advance a binding treaty prohibiting lethal autonomous weapons systems, and develop and endorse global frameworks governing the use of AI in armed conflict overall; this includes, as recommended by the International Committee of the Red Cross, ensuring that existing international humanitarian law is the starting point for all normative development,** [127] **and undertaking meaningful engagement with civil society and other stakeholders on women, peace and security to develop feminist approaches rooted in the principles of conflict prevention;**

(d) **Recognize data centres as gendered environmental infrastructure, including requiring gender-responsive environmental and human rights impact assessments prior to licensing that include attention to Indigenous women and women in climate-vulnerable regions, mandating public reporting by companies that includes the meaningful participation of affected communities, women's organizations and Indigenous Peoples, preventing reprisals against women environmental defenders and guaranteeing access to effectives remedies, such as the right to challenge permits, access to information and compensation, and establishing a moratorium on the development of new data centres in regions experiencing high or critical water stress;**[128]

(e) **Strengthen and harmonize national legislation and mechanisms to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence and its impact on women's and girls' human rights, including those who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including migrants, refugees, LGBTIQ+ persons, and those from rural areas or racial, or religious minority backgrounds; this includes ensuring regulation, transparency, access to justice, prevention, accountability and effective remedies for survivors, amending legal and policy frameworks to address the systemic impact of AI-enabled harms, establishing binding obligations with regard to transparency and accountability for digital platforms and AI companies on gender-based harms, and providing regulators with investigative and enforcement powers and the authority to impose effective and proportionate sanctions; this also includes investing in building**

[127] See https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/ICRC_Report_Submission_to_UNSG_on_AI_in_military_domain.pdf.

[128] A/HRC/60/30, para. 106.

the capacity of public sector actors, grounded in feminist principles of care, accountability and survivor-centred practice, ensuring rapid response and effective redress mechanisms for harms caused by AI and digital technologies, and strengthening international cooperation and cross-border mechanisms to strengthen access to justice;

(f) **Enact and enforce legislation protecting privacy and personal data, strictly regulating the collection, use and retention of personal and identifying data through AI, prohibiting non-consensual data-sharing for profit or unlawful targeting, including by addressing gender data gaps and data set bias, and prohibiting the collection, processing or sharing of health information, including reproductive data, with public or private actors for profit, law enforcement or any other purpose without clear, specific and revocable consent;**

(g) **Enact and enforce legislation regulating AI-enabled surveillance, in alignment with international human rights standards, prohibiting mass, arbitrary and intrusive surveillance practices without due process or oversight, especially those targeting women and girls belonging to marginalized communities, with a particular focus on the bias, stereotyping and discriminatory outcomes perpetuated by such technologies.**

62. **The Working Group recommends that the United Nations:**

(a) **Address the gender digital divide by prioritizing funding for initiatives led by women-led civil society organizations, women and girl community members and women rights defenders, and earmarking funding for technology training, particularly for women and girls, as part of operational and developmental support;**

(b) **Advance the development of guidance and capacity-building initiatives that promote gender-responsive approaches to AI governance, including in the area of AI and exploitative digital labour practices, and assist States in integrating equality, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability into AI policy and regulatory frameworks, including by facilitating coordination within United Nations entities on gender-responsive approaches and supporting the meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls;**

(c) **Develop actionable guidance on incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems into climate-resilient AI, centring the meaningful leadership and participation of Indigenous women in relevant research, negotiations and decision-making forums;**

(d) **Develop and endorse global frameworks governing the use of AI in armed conflict, recognizing how AI technologies amplify gender discrimination, including by advancing a binding treaty to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems; this includes ensuring that existing international humanitarian law is the starting point for all normative development;**

(e) **Produce sector-specific due diligence guidance for States, investors and companies on data centres with a dedicated focus on gender-differentiated environmental effects, including by supporting the development of international standards for gender-responsive AI environmental governance; and develop guidance on the protection of women environmental defenders from AI-enabled targeting and reprisals;**[129]

(f) **Build capacity for existing United Nations independent investigative mechanisms to be able to account for AI-enabled surveillance and technology-facilitated gender-based violence and support independent monitoring and reporting on the use of AI to criminalize, profile or target women and girls, including on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, political speech, sexual orientation or gender identity; this requires the United Nations to ensure that it undertakes gender-responsive human rights due diligence in all technical assistance and**

[129] See the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

capacity-building to States in the context of counter-terrorism and of preventing and countering violent extremism which is conducive to terrorism;[130]

(g) **Develop gender-responsive international guidelines on requiring that AI systems obtain informed and revocable consent from users before collecting, retaining, sharing or processing data or likeness.**

63. **The Working Group recommends that the private sector:**

(a) **Broaden women's and girls' access to AI and digital technologies in ways that promote safe use and expand access to benefits, accounting for gender-based privacy concerns and persistent digital divides, including for women and girls in rural areas, women and girls living in poverty and women and girls with disabilities;**

(b) **Establish transparent, systematic and gender-responsive human rights due diligence before and during the design, throughout the deployment and throughout the full life cycle of AI systems, including by conducting mandatory gender impact assessments, building cross-functional teams that include human rights and gender expertise and establishing transparent grievance mechanisms for gender-based algorithmic harms throughout the full AI life cycle;**

(c) **Address structural technical and social biases in data sets by investing in inclusive, representative and locally grounded data sets that reflect linguistic diversity and contextual meanings, developed in collaboration with civil society and affected communities;**

(d) **Protect the labour rights of all workers involved in AI development and deployment, with particular attention to vulnerable workers, including women and girls employed as data annotators and content moderators, ensuring adequate wages and benefits, safe working conditions and accessible grievance procedures to report violations;**

(e) **Invest in and contribute to the well-being of communities hosting data infrastructure, with particular attention to women, girls and Indigenous Peoples, including by conducting consultations to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples prior to creating data infrastructure in their territories, incorporating Indigenous and other traditional knowledge systems and languages into project design and supporting climate-resilient AI technologies;**

(f) **Apply human rights and environmental due diligence throughout the full AI life cycle, ensure gender-responsive impact assessment with regard to water, energy, emissions and labour, comply with applicable legal standards and provide affected communities with accessible mechanisms for grievance and remedy;**

(g) **Safeguard user privacy and autonomy by prohibiting the collection and sharing of personal data with third parties without explicit, informed consent, and cease the development and sale of AI systems that enable mass or arbitrary surveillance, particularly when deployed to identify, target or criminalize women and girls on the basis of speech, race, gender identity, immigration status or gender expression;**

(h) **Strengthen AI transparency on social media platforms through cooperation between teams working on gender, human rights and trust and safety, and ensure that users are offered a clear, easily accessible and persistent choice to opt out of profiling-based recommendation systems.**

[130] See A/76/261, A/HRC/52/39 and https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/terrorism/sr/un-sr-ct-ai-position-paper-dec-2025.pdf.

Annex

Main Activities of the Working Group (May 2025–April 2026)

I. Sessions

1. At its forty-second session, held in New York from 26 to 30 May 2025, the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls held meetings with the Secretary-General, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Member States, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, civil society, as well as domestic workers from China and Latin America. It also organized a launch event for its guidance document on substantive gender equality and held consultations for this present report, including with the Meta Oversight Board and the Global Compact.

2. The third annual session of the Working Group in 2024 was cancelled due to the UN liquidity crisis and in lieu of the session the Working Group held a regional convening for the Balkans in Serbia, from 29 September to 3 October 2025. During the convening, it met with civil society, academia, attorneys and judges, women and girls human rights defenders, journalists and United Nations agencies in Belgrade and Novi Sad, as well as online in a hybrid format.

3. At its forty-third session, held in Geneva from 19 to 23 January 2026, the Working Group held meetings with the High Commissioner, Member States and regional groups, civil society, and Afghan women human rights defenders. It also organized launch events for its guidance document on the rights of women and girls in family life, and for the OHCHR publication titled “Advancing women’s rights and gender equality: the fifteenth anniversary of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.” The Working Group also engaged in consultations for this present report with UNICEF, UN Women, OHCHR colleagues, and students from the European University for Well-Being.

II. Country visits

4. The Working Group visited the Republic of Zimbabwe from 28 July to 8 August 2025 and the Republic of Armenia from 16 to 25 March 2026. The report on the visit to Zimbabwe is an addendum to this report, while the one on Armenia will be presented to the Human Rights Council in June 2027. The Working Group thanks the Governments for their cooperation and encourages States to respond positively to its requests for visits.

III. Communications and press releases

5. The Working Group addressed nearly 90 communications to Governments and other stakeholders, individually or jointly with other mandate holders, of which 13 were led by the Working Group. The communications concerned a wide range of subjects, including: discriminatory laws and practices; allegations of violations of the rights of women human rights defenders, journalists, and politicians; women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including migrant, asylum-seeking, refugee and internally displaced women, women belonging to racial or ethnic minorities or Indigenous Peoples, and LBTQI+ women; women and girls affected by armed conflict; women deprived of liberty; and violations of sexual and reproductive health rights. The Working Group issued nearly 80 press releases and statements, both individually and jointly with other mandate holders, the human rights treaty bodies and regional mechanisms, of which 12 were led by

the Working Group[1]. The press releases and statements addressed, inter alia, the impact of armed conflict, forced displacement, occupation, and aid restrictions on women and girls, including in the occupied Palestinian territories; the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and the call for recognition of gender apartheid in the Treaty on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Humanity; justice, truth, reparations and accountability for serious and historical violations, including for survivors of the so-called "comfort women" system established and controlled by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II; the exclusion of women from peace and security processes, including in Haiti; violations against women human rights defenders, refugee and migrant women and girls, and LBTQI+ women; the reaffirmation of the central role of gender in advancing human rights and equality; and the call for urgent overhaul of global care and support systems to advance gender equality and human rights.

IV. Other activities

6. Members engaged actively with multilateral, regional and expert processes concerning the human rights of women and girls. The Chair presented an oral report to the General Assembly at its eightieth session and during the opening segment of the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). In the context of CSW, the Chair of the Working Group participated in a preparatory Expert Group Meeting ahead of the seventieth session. At CSW, the Working Group co-organized five side events: "Envisioning Equality: The Case for Egalitarian Family Law Reform," co-organized with the Global Campaign for Equality in Family Laws (GCEFL), UN Women, and the Permanent Mission of Sweden; "Automating Justice: Can Artificial Intelligence Increase Women's and Girls' Access to Justice?" co-organized with the Permanent Missions of the Republic of Korea, Estonia, and the European Union; "Access to Justice Denied: Women Facing the Death Penalty," co-organized with the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, the Advocates for Human Rights, Penal Reform International, Harm Reduction International, Just Futures Collaborative, Witness to Innocence, Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network, Women Beyond Walls, and the Permanent Missions of Switzerland, Canada, and Mexico; "Strengthening Access to Justice for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in a Complex Global Context," co-organized with the Center for Reproductive Rights, and the Guttmacher Institute; "Algorithmic Bias, Gender Justice, and Descent-Based Discrimination: Ensuring AI Works for All Women and Girls," co-organized with the Global Forum of Communities Discriminated against Based on Work & Descent (GFoD), The Inclusivity Project (TIP), the European Union Delegation to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania. Additionally, Members participated in six CSW side events. Other engagements included participation in the opening of a panel discussion on the African Union Convention on ending violence against women and girls during the eighty-third ordinary session of the African Commission; two meetings of the Human Rights Council President's Advisory Board on Gender Equality; the twenty-fourth, twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, and twenty-seventh meetings of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW Platform), as well as a meeting of the EDVAW Platform with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Gulf Cooperation Council; high-level events marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Brussels, Madrid and Vienna; and the Eleventh Glion Human Rights Dialogue on Beijing+30.

7. A significant area of engagement concerned gender equality in digital spaces. Members participated in events and discussions on countering gendered disinformation; automating justice; algorithmic bias; gender bias in justice systems; and descent-based discrimination in AI systems. Additional activities included participation in a United Nations B-Tech Project roundtable on business and human rights in technology contexts, a conference on AI's impact on women's rights from the perspective of international human rights law,

[1] All communications are available at https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TmSearch/TMDocuments, and press releases at Latest | OHCHR.

and discussions with a private-sector actor in China on environmental, social and governance measures to improve gender equality.

8. As one of its key priority areas, the Working Group remained active on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, and in particular efforts to advance recognition, codification and accountability in relation to gender apartheid. Members participated in a series of high-level conferences, strategic convenings and public advocacy initiatives, including the second high-level international conference on advancing gender justice and accountability for women of Afghanistan, an event on the consequences of the education ban on schoolgirls in Afghanistan, a strategic convening on countering gender apartheid with international law, and a high-level dialogue on "Gender Apartheid as a Crime Against Humanity". Members also engaged with accountability pathways through participation in the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan in Madrid, the judgment announcement of the Tribunal in The Hague on the occasion of its fifty-fifth session, the HearUs 2025 event on promoting accountability for women in Afghanistan in Madrid, a panel in Ottawa on global solidarity to end gender apartheid, and the high-level conference "Four Mechanisms, One Purpose: Advancing Accountability for Restoring Women's Rights in Afghanistan", including discussion of the International Court of Justice mechanism in the Afghanistan case. Public outreach on these issues was further pursued through media and online advocacy, including a social media video statement on gender apartheid in Afghanistan disseminated by UNICEF Junior Team Berlin and a radio interview on accountability for women and girls in Afghanistan, including gender persecution.

9. Members of the Working Group also advanced work on care and support systems and women's economic participation. This included engagement in Human Rights Council side events on the precarity of undervalued gendered labour and on discriminatory laws and practices affecting women's economic participation; a conference on Indigenous women, care and the environment in Mexico City; the commemoration of the International Day of Care and Support; and the launch of the Turkish translation of the Working Group's 2025 thematic report on the gendered dimensions of care and support systems.

10. Furthermore, Members advanced work on substantive equality in relation to women and girls affected by caste- and descent-based discrimination. In that connection, they participated in a dialogue with UN Women and the GFoD in preparation for a UN Women policy brief, and a side event held in the margins of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at which that policy brief was launched.

11. Sexual and reproductive health rights and the rights of women and girls in family life remained central to the Working Group's activities. Members participated in events on surrogacy, conscientious objection, strengthening access to justice for sexual and reproductive health rights in a complex global context, and SOGI. They also contributed to discussions and training on sexual and reproductive health rights in African academic settings and to activities related to women's equal right to participate in the judiciary and women's access to justice. In addition, members participated in initiatives concerning child, early and forced marriage and unions, including the first in-person meeting of the Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Unions and Sexuality Working Group, a global consultation on OHCHR guidelines on preventing and responding to child and forced marriage, and a global webinar on laws and policies to address such practices. The Working Group also submitted an amicus curiae to the Constitutional Court of Ecuador in proceedings concerning the criminalization of abortion, arguing that criminalization violates international human rights law and constitutes discrimination against women and girls. From 7 to 11 July 2025, the Working Group participated in a series of meetings in Brazil (in São Paulo, Brasília and Goiás) on sexual and reproductive health rights as well as the impacts of police violence, at the invitation of Conectas Direitos Humanos. This included exchanges with the Health Ministry, the Human Rights Ministry and the Racial Equality Ministry, the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, the National Council of Justice, the National Commission on Population and Development, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office and the Public Prosecutor's Office of Goiás, the Public Defender's Offices of the State of São Paulo, Brasília and Goiás, Advisory Offices of the Federal Supreme Court, parliamentarians, UN Agencies, and NGOs. Academic engagement, training and public outreach also formed an important part of the Working Group's activities. Members delivered lectures, presentations

and interactive sessions at, inter alia, Central South University of China, the European University Institute, the Institute Louis Joinet Summer University, Makerere University, Renmin University of China, the University of Calabar, the University of Murcia, the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School, the University of Pretoria, the University of the Western Cape and Yale Law School. They also engaged with students through the Model United Nations Club of the Aga Khan International School, as well as with students, young people and civil society through career panels, training programmes and workshops. Moreover, from 22 to 24 April 2026, the Working Group Chair, alongside the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity, organized the Strategic Retreat "Gender and International Law-Making: Regressing on Rights and Changing Political Landscapes at the United Nations" at Yale Law School for Member States interested in prioritizing issues of gender equality and women's rights in multilateral negotiations and forums at the United Nations.