Ericsson Inputs to OHCHR report on ways to bridge the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective

The meaning of the digital divide/extent of the problem

1. Please identify the main obstacles and barriers faced by women and girls to access digital technologies and participate in digital life. Please elaborate on the nature **of** these obstacles and how they manifest themselves in practice (e.g. political, economic, social and legal factors, cultural and religious norms, education and literacy gaps, online violence, bullying and harassment, infrastructural constraints, security, affordability, lack of relevant content).

Ericsson is a global leader in delivering ICT solutions. In fact, 40% of the world's mobile traffic is carried over Ericsson networks. We have customers in over 180 countries and comprehensive industry solutions ranging from Cloud services and Mobile Broadband to Network Design and Optimization.

Our services, software and infrastructure - especially in mobility, broadband and the cloud - are enabling the communications industry and other sectors to do better business, increase efficiency, improve user experience and capture new opportunities. However, we are mainly a business to business company so some of the questions below are not relevant for us.

There is an enormous opportunity to bridge the digital divide and bring mobile broadband coverage to the nearly four billion people who are underserved or without mobile broadband access. Mobile broadband is a key backbone of national infrastructure development, especially in emerging markets, which represent the majority of the offline population. Forecasts predict 5.6 billion unique mobile subscribers globally by 2020 – which is likely to be more than the number of people with electricity at home (5.3 billion), bank accounts (4.5 billion), or running water (3.5 billion), according to GSMA Intelligence. But a gender gap does exist.

Some of the gender divide challenges are further elaborated upon in our 2016 report, "ICT & SDGs: How Information and Communications Technology Can Accelerate Action on the Sustainable Development Goals," published in collaboration with the Earth Institute at Columbia University, GSMA and ITU. As the fastest and most global technology uptake in history, mobile broadband has the potential to positively impact all of the 17 SDGs.

Ericsson has been a member of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development since the start in 2010. The Annual State of Broadband 2016 highlights advocacy to achieve gender equality in access to broadband by 2020.

Another report describing some challenges is "Better Business, Better World" published by the Business & Sustainable Development Commission in which Ericsson is a member.

2. Does your company/organization consider the impact of its digital products, services, strategies and policies on women and girls?

See reports above.

> Internally Ericsson, we have during the past two years reviewed all our people-related policies and directives from a diversity and inclusion perspective. We aim to be as fair, transparent, and non-biased in our recruitment, promotion, and recognition of individuals. For 2017, local documentation is to be reviewed, and if needed, amended to adhere to the global intentions and guidelines.

3. Please indicate if your company/organization collects sex and gender disaggregated data regarding access, use and impact of digital technologies. Is this data openly published and accessible (in accordance with responsible data practices)? If possible, please provide such statistics.

> See reports above

4. Please indicate if your company/organization has set measurable targets for gender equality in access and use of digital technologies and describe those targets and their effect.

> See reports above

5. How does your company/organization address the needs of diverse members of the female population in terms of accessing and participating in digital technologies, including women and girls belonging to ethnic or linguistic minorities, those living in extreme poverty or of low caste, those living in rural or marginalized urban areas, women and girls with disabilities, lesbian, transgender and intersex persons, elderly women etc.? What can companies/organizations do to ensure access to alternative communications mechanisms for those unable or unwilling to participate in digital technologies?

> Through our Technology for Good initiatives, we channel our leadership and advocacy, often in collaboration with public and private partners, to address a range of global challenges. The role of ICT to boost socio-economic development cannot be underestimated. It can play an instrumental role in tackling urgent global issues such as poverty and hunger, enhancing financial and social inclusion, improving access to education and health, and addressing humanitarian issues such as refugees, peace building and disaster response. Many of these projects address the needs of the female population and for more details on the different projects, please see Ericsson Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility Report 2016

One project is the Connect to Learn which is a global education initiative launched in 2010 by the Earth Institute of Columbia University, Millennium Promise and Ericsson. It is designed to channel innovation in mobility, broadband and the cloud to help overcome the obstacles to increasing access to quality education. There are considerable challenges in introducing mobile broadband technology to schools in developing countries. These include logistical difficulties in bringing connectivity to rural areas; access to electricity; security; low levels of IT knowledge among teachers; and the lack of a strong business model to ensure efforts are sustainable. The aim of Connect to Learn is to scale up access to quality secondary education, in particular for girls, in some cases providing scholarships and bringing ICT to schools in remote, resource-poor parts of the world, using mobile broadband and cloud. 23 countries have active deployments and more than 80 000 students are benefitting.

Another initiative is the Girls in ICT Program. The lack of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) careers has long been a challenge facing the ICT industry. During 2016, we doubled the number of girls in our Girls in ICT program from 1,445 girls participating in 2015 to 3,000 girls taking part in 2016. We have found this a successful way to build our pipeline of talent and attract more women to ICT. Girls In ICT Day, which has a mission to empower and encourage girls and young women to consider studies and careers in the growing field of ICT, is celebrated each year at Ericsson. In 2016, for the second year in a row, Ericsson South Africa marked its participation in this initiative by joining Techno Girl – a job-shadowing program aimed at increasing and enhancing the participation of girls in STEM careers.

Human Rights implications of the gender digital divide for women and girls

6. What is your company/organization doing to ensure that its interventions to bridge the gender digital divide, are based upon, and fully consistent with international human rights, including gender equality? Does it conduct impact assessments and/or consult with civil society, affected communities, and human rights experts? (You may wish to consider some key principles required to adopt a human rights-based approach *viz*.: accountability, equality and non-discrimination, participation, transparency, empowerment, sustainability, etc.).[1]

We respect all internationally proclaimed human rights as reflected in our Code of Business Ethics and Code of Conduct.

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[1] Other human rights considerations that could/should be taken into consideration include freedoms of expression, association, religion or belief, freedom from violence, right to education, life, health, identity, an adequate standard of living, to participate in government and in cultural life, promotion of gender equality and rights of non-discrimination, rights of indigenous peoples, minority rights, rights of migrant workers, right to enjoy the benefits of scientific advancement, etc.

Over the past several years, we have worked to develop and strengthen our human rights framework to fulfil our responsibility to respect human rights according to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP). Since 2011, we have been working to integrate the UNGP into our governance framework.

In 2016, for the third year, we are applying the UNGP Reporting Framework, the first comprehensive guidance for companies to report on how they respect human rights see [Ericsson Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility Report 2016](#) (p.66–67). We are the first ICT company and one of the early adopters to report according to the Framework. We have defined our salient human rights issues to be the right to freedom of expression, the right to privacy, and labor rights. These are highlighted in the Code of Business Ethics and Code of Conduct.

We identify and manage our salient human rights issues in a number of ways. This include Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIA) in high-risk countries, stakeholder consultations in conjunction with HRIAs and internal processes such as the Sales Compliance Process. HRIA results are shared and discussed in consultations with stakeholders such as employees, investors, governments, customers and civil society, for additional information, see [Ericsson Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility Report 2016](#)

7. How does your company/organization encourage the development and use of digital technologies as a resource for the empowerment of women and girls? How does it support the creation of online content, applications and services that reflect women's needs and/or promote their rights? Does it support women's rights organizations, women human rights defenders and women environmental activists to use these technologies (for example to access critical information, build knowledge, express thoughts and beliefs, form networks and communities and mobilise for change)? Please provide any relevant examples.

See reports mentioned above.

Ericsson encourages and supports our internal Employee Resource Groups overall, and so far the communities targeting women's working conditions and work-life balance have gained the most members. Both global and local initiatives are in place for coaching and mentoring, addressing both our own employees and external organizations and/or individuals. We engage in several external initiatives, like TechWomen, which empowers and connects next-generation women leaders from Africa and the Middle East in science, technology engineering and mathematics. Other organizations with which we engaged in 2016 are Women for Sustainable Growth, a network for leaders in academia, business and society within the Gulf Region and Scandinavia; Women in Technology and Science, a forum supporting women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to reach their full potential, and the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing, the world's largest talent fair of women computer scientists.

8. Does your company/organization take into account the gender and ICT targets contained in the UN Sustainable Development Goals?[2] Please elaborate.

   See reports mentioned above.

9. Are you aware of any laws, policies or practices to address technology-related or technology-mediated violence against women and girls (e.g. cyber bullying, hate speech, stalking, sexual harassment, trafficking, manipulation of personal information and images)? Has your company/organization taken any specific actions to protect against, and respond to violence experienced by women and girls via technology platforms (e.g. policies, monitoring of content, providing mechanisms for reporting and redress)?

   The Ericsson Group Management System includes the Code of Business Ethics, the Code of Conduct, the Occupational Health & Safety Policy and the Sustainability Policy. Our Code of Business Ethics sets the overall tone for how we conduct business. It includes our commitment to uphold the UN Global Compact Principles and to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) throughout our business operations and supply chain. It also contains our zero tolerance for corruption and bribery. Employees sign the Code of Business Ethics at the time of employment and periodically throughout the term of employment; the next such signing is planned for 2017.

   The Code of Conduct applies to both employees and suppliers and encompasses our company commitments. It is based on the UN Global Compact principles which cover human rights, labor conditions, environmental management and anti-corruption. We respect all internationally proclaimed human rights and we are committed to implementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights throughout our business operations.

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[2] For example, Goal 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women; Goal 9.c Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.

Ericsson developed during 2016 a new app designed to prevent and detect the sexual abuse of children. Working together with World Childhood Foundation in the US, and an organization called Darkness to Light we have developed the "Stewards of Children Prevention Toolkit" mobile app. I is a first-of-its kind mobile application that equips adults – caretakers, teachers and parents – with the skills and resources necessary to recognize, prevent and respond to child sexual abuse.

10. Does your company/organization facilitate access to remedy in accordance with human rights principles and standards, where human rights harms may be caused or contributed to by connectivity initiatives (e.g. where an individual is threatened by internet-based content, or by illegitimate surveillance, limitations on freedoms of expressions, and other rights)?[3]

> One way in which we provide remedy is through the Ericsson Compliance Line (p. 21) where alleged violations of the Code of Business Ethics including in relation to human rights may be reported through a whistleblower tool.

11. Has your company/organization considered how Big Data, the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and Ambient Intelligence may impact on the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective? Do you see a risk that women and girls may be discriminated against, or excluded by these technologies? Or are they likely to create new opportunities to promote gender equality and empowerment? How can companies/organizations influence design and standards to ensure these technologies are inclusive?

> See reports mentioned above.

Possible solutions for bridging the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective

12. Is your company/organization taking measures to expand equal access and enhance the participation of women and girls in digital technologies as users, content creators, employees, entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders? Please elaborate on any initiatives, programs or other interventions you may be leading or supporting (including to address underlying causes of the gender digital divide).

> See reports mentioned above.

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[3] See UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, Principles 29 - 31.

13. Does your company/organization engage in public advocacy or participate in the Internet Governance Forum to promote gender-responsive policies on digital technologies? Do you support processes and mechanisms that enable the full, active and equal participation of women and girls in decision-making about how the Internet is shaped and governed?

     See reports mentioned above.

14. How can the industry and tech community be productively engaged in bridging the gender digital divide and improving the lived experience of women and girls online? What should be the responsibilities of different stakeholders to make digital inclusion a reality and ensure meaningful digital opportunities for all?

     See reports mentioned above