Statement on Internet Governance
Submitted by AMARC (World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters)
Africa, FEMNET African Women’s Development and Communication Network,
and TERRE DES FEMMES on behalf of the WSIS-Gender Caucus.

Tuesday, 27 September 2005

The WSIS Gender Caucus considers Internet Governance to be a crucial global
Information Society issue. We have a shared responsibility to billions of people, both
now and in the future. It makes no sense therefore to not acknowledge over 50% of the
world's population. We believe that gender equality and women’s empowerment are
cross-cutting principles in Internet Governance as are the right to freedom of expression
and human rights. Without these, it is impossible to achieve a just, participatory and
equal information society.

Unfortunately, we note with dismay the lack of gender equality and indeed, any reference
to gender in the Chair’s Draft of Chapter 3. World leaders have recently reaffirmed the
vital and core position of the principle of gender equality, in the UN Outcome Document,
and the WIGG report includes, in Para 43, language on ensuring ‘equal representation of
women at all levels’. The WSIS Gender Caucus would like to see this recommendation
included in all governance mechanisms and arrangements.

The WSIS Gender Caucus believes that Internet Governance functions will require
decision-making about substantive public policy issues. Women’s equal participation
with men is vital in this decision making.

The GC also appreciates the emphasis given by the Chair to the development aspects of
Internet Governance – infrastructure, capacity building, promoting participation from
developing countries and multilingualism, and the Gender Caucus would like to see
specific action on including women in these activities. Governments should make explicit
commitments to implementing appropriate Internet Governance structures that are multi-
stakeholder, inclusive, and transparent and that have the equal participation of women
and men.

The issue of inter-connection mechanisms needs to be addressed urgently to contribute to
the empowerment of developing countries, and their disconnected populations, which are
predominantly female, rather than disadvantaging them as at present.

The Gender Caucus urges continued work on multilingualism as a way to promote local
content and diversity on the Internet. Women’s’ voices are particularly at risk of being
muted by this issue.

The GC looks forward to engaging with other stakeholders in developing the WSIS
recommendations on IG in a way that is consistent with the above stated principles that
will contribute to achieving gender equality.

We have submitted written comments with specific text suggestions to the Secretariat.