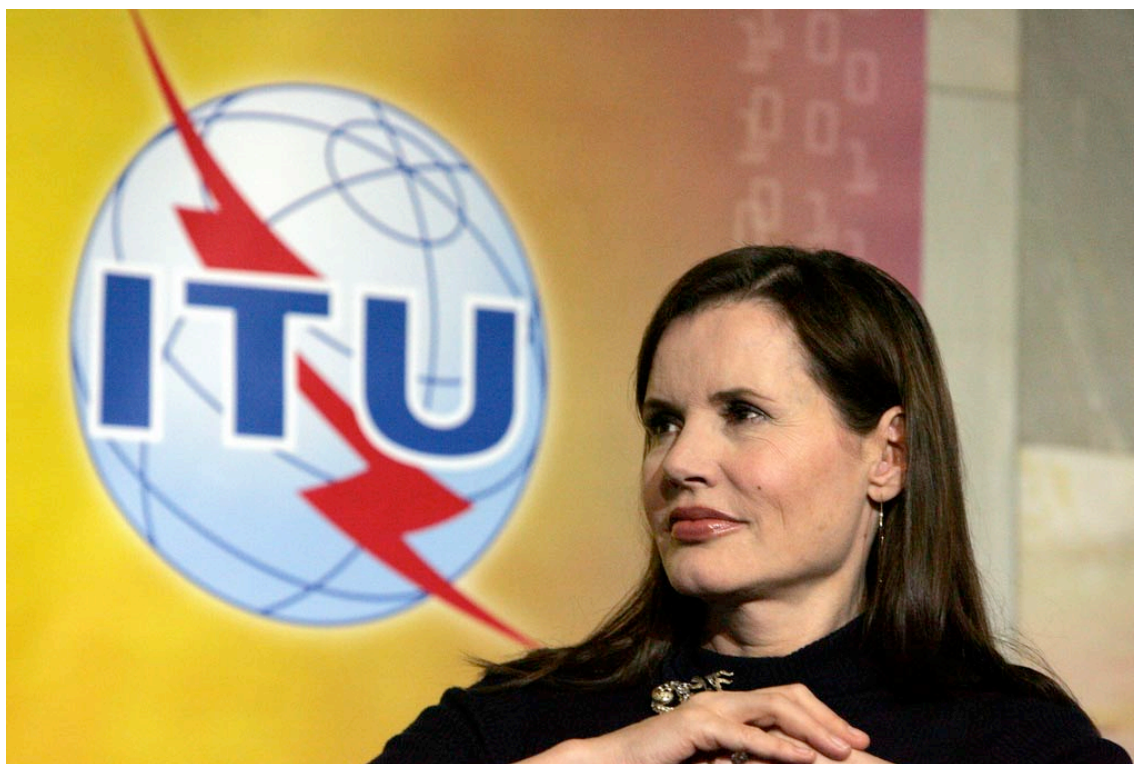


At UN-backed gathering, Asia-Pacific leaders urged to give region's women more access to technology jobs



Special Envoy for Women and Girls in the field of technology, Geena Davis. Photo: ITU Pictures

16 October 2012 – Asia-Pacific leaders attending a high-level United Nations-backed technology gathering heard a call for an increased presence of women in the region's media, information and communication technology (ICT), and communications industries.

The two-day 'Women with the Wave' forum in Seoul, Republic of Korea, urged media industry leaders, governments and international organizations to “work harder to promote greater female representation” in industry workplaces and on the airwaves, according to a joint [news release today](#) from the UN International Telecommunication Union ([ITU](#)) and the Asia Broadcasting

Union (ABU), a non-profit, non-government, professional association that aims to advance broadcasting in the region.

The gathering identified the need for a “gender-inclusive” environment in all occupational groups to encourage women and girls to seek on- and off-screen communications and technology jobs, the release said.

The forum also called for women to be given greater access to technological and digital platforms, and argued for a positive, non-stereotypical and balanced portrayal of women and girls across all forms of media and technological platforms.

US actress Geena Davis, who was recently appointed ITU’s Special Envoy for Women and Girls, set the tone for the gathering’s final statement with her endorsement of its aims in her keynote address on the first day of the 10-11 October conference.

“The time for change is now, and all of you in this room are powerful agents of change,” said the Oscar-winning actress. “I’d like to applaud Asian broadcasters, filmmakers, Internet stakeholders, academics and others in taking the lead to change the image of women and girls in ICTs.”

Referring to the televised dramas of the Republic of Korea, and India’s Hindi-language film industry, Ms. Davis added, “From Korea’s famous K-dramas to Bollywood musicals, we need the characters that will inspire tomorrow’s tech-centred professionals.”

ITU’s Secretary-General, Dr. Hamadoun I. Touré, highlighted the agency’s commitment to harnessing ICTs to empower women, citing various initiatives, including ITU’s ‘Tech Needs Girls’ campaign and the new annual ‘Tech Needs Girls Prize,’ which targets girls aged 9-18 “at the time when they are forming opinions and making career choices.”

“Together, the campaign and prize aim to help them see a connection between tech and their daily lives, gain confidence in their skills and find fun in ICT,” Dr. Touré said. He also spoke of the agency’s ‘Girls in ICT Portal,’ saying the “comprehensive, multilingual” site “highlights tech scholarships, training opportunities and mentorship programmes for girls and women around the world.”

Delegates identified ITU, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific ([ESCAP](#)), UNESCO and UN Women among international organizations in a position to help advance the forum’s goals as their final statement called on “all who can assist to recognize the digital wave now sweeping the world and to join us in supporting the preparation of women and girls for the opportunities and benefits which the knowledge society is now bringing to families worldwide.”

The forum was one of several events ahead of the 49th ABU General Assembly in the Republic of Korean capital, Seoul.

It concluded as ITU [announced](#) from Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, two new initiatives aimed at achieving sustainable development by harnessing smart ICT, in particular mobile broadband.

The initiatives – m-Powering Development and Smart Sustainable Development Model – were launched on the Saving Lives Platform at ITU Telecom World 2012 in Dubai.

M-Powering Development seeks to act as a catalyst to achieve sustainability, according to an ITU press release. The Smart Sustainable Development Model seeks to demonstrate that linking ICT for Development with ICT for Disaster Management leads to “increased sustainable development and optimal resource use without additional financial investment,” according to ITU.

“In a world increasingly threatened by natural disasters brought on by global climate change, we have to seize the opportunities available to us through smart, cutting edge technologies to swing the tide towards achieving sustainable development,” said Dr. Touré. “The deployment of mobile broadband goes beyond merely making a phone call; it brings about a paradigm shift in social and economic empowerment and development. It is truly m-Powering!”

Global roll out of the initiatives, which will be steered by ITU’s Telecommunication Development Bureau, is expected by April 2014.

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