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Author: Ban Ki-moon

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Message from United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

■ I welcome the focus on women and girls as the theme of this year's World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.

Information and communications technologies (ICT) are already benefiting women and girls in numerous ways. E-commerce is expanding opportunities for entrepreneurship; mobile telephones are enabling midwives to make child-birth safer; electronic social networks are allowing women around the world to mobilize as never before for democracy, dignity and human rights.

At the same time, we know that ICT have the potential to cause harm. Cyberbullying, Internet-driven human trafficking and other abuses often target women and girls. We must do everything possible to stop these crimes and promote greater online security for everyone.

More broadly, we should work to optimize the power of ICT to support sustainable development. By gathering, disseminating and analysing information, we can accelerate action to protect natural resources, combat climate change and help vulnerable people, including women and girls.

This is especially important in the context of the "Rio+20" United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in June 2012 in Brazil. In the run-up to the conference, and especially afterwards as we implement the decisions taken there, ICT can make possible new approaches and solutions for a sustainable future.

On this World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, I call again for wide-ranging efforts to close both the digital divide and the gender gap. Everyone must be able to make the best use of ICT to help create the future we want.



United Nations Secretary-General,
Ban Ki-moon

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