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Speech by Ms. Cynthia López Castro, President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

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Madam President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished guests,
Dear colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to address the Assembly's General Debate in my role as President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

As we explore the role of science, technology, and innovation in shaping our shared future, we must ask ourselves: who is benefitting from these advancements? Who is driving them? And for what purpose?

Colleagues, as we gather here today, let us commit to ensuring that women and girls in all their diversity are not left behind in the rapidly evolving world of STI.

We are at a crossroads. Technology can either improve gender equality or deepen the gender digital divide and exacerbate discrimination. If we want to use its potential for good, we must actively leverage it to promote equality.

It is not only the right thing to do. But also the smart thing to do. Why? Simply because a sustainable future is unattainable without prioritizing the needs, interests, perspectives, and experiences of half the population.

Artificial Intelligence and other new and emerging technologies are a reality. We simply cannot afford to be passive bystanders.

AI and digital tools more broadly have an immense potential to enhance access to education, healthcare, and other services for women and girls in all their diversity.

AI can also play a vital role in identifying gender biases across various sectors, including in Parliament, to promote more equitable outcomes.

But gender-responsive technological advancements won't happen alone.

We need to redouble our efforts to ensure education, employment, and leadership opportunities for women in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

We must hold our governments and the private sector accountable, by ensuring they apply high ethical standards in the development and deployment of new technologies. Their work must place human rights and dignity at the centre, and avoid perpetuating existing biases.

We must also confront the risks that come with new technologies, including tech-facilitated gender-based violence, harassment, and trafficking.

Women in politics in particular are at great risk of cyberbullying. And the girls of today will refrain from being the leaders of tomorrow if this exponential threat remains so widespread.

These risks demand our attention, vigilance and firm legislative action.

They demand gender-sensitive parliaments, where women have an equal role in shaping the future of technology - our common future.

Colleagues,

Together, we can and must build a future where STI is harnessed for the benefit of all, and where women are not just observers, but leaders.

Thank you.