

**International Women's Day 2023-Press Release**

**08 March 2023**

***“Millennium Development Goal 5 must be respected for equitable access and justice”***

Today, 8 March 2023, marks the International Women's Day, and CoRMSA joins the rest of the world in commemorating and celebrating the immense contributions made by all women towards the digital and economic world under the theme ***“DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality”***.

**According to the United Nations Women**, women make up only 22 percent of artificial intelligence workers globally. A global analysis of 133 AI systems across industries found that 44.2 percent demonstrate gender bias. This data highlights the low involvement of women in the digital age from the earliest days of computing to the contemporary virtual reality and artificial intelligence. Despite these challenges faced, all women (inclusive of asylum seeker, refugee and migrant women) have continued to make substantial contributions to the digital world in which we continue to live in. Against all odds, they have made several digital accomplishments, in a field that has historically neither gave them a warm reception, embraced nor appreciated them.

Today, a relentless gender gap in digital access restrain women from harnessing the full potential of technology. Their manmade and systematically marginalisation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education and careers continuously impedes on their participation in technological design and governance. This includes the pervasive threat of online gender-based violence, coupled with a lack of legal recourse too, often propel them out of the digital spaces that they occupy. We need to note that digital technology is opening various opportunities for women empowerment globally to eliminate all forms of disparity, discrimination and inequality geared against women.

In the same vain, women have also severely suffered from all forms of gender-based violence. In 2021, Statistics South Africa released a report, Crimes Against Women in South Africa, indicating that one in five women (21%) had experienced physical violence by a partner. These high numbers of reported gender-based violence cases against women are a call of concern. Women are leaving in constant fear of being raped, killed, assaulted or trafficked. In lights of this, while observing this day, CoRMSA calls everyone to adhere and respect the millennium development goal 5 that of achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030 through the elimination of all forms of violence and femicides against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. CoRMSA further calls the relevant state governments, locally and globally, to protect all women regardless of their nationality status from gender-based violence and inequality by strengthening the policies and mechanisms to curb such. We further urge the South African government to bring all perpetrators to book to account for their actions.

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