

2022 East Asia Gender Equality Forum:

Challenges, Opportunities, and Ethical Issues in the Digital Age

Date: Friday, 11 November 2022

Statement Delivered at Opening Ceremony by Theresa Der-lan Yeh

Good morning, friends, and distinguished guests, welcome to the 2022 East Asia Gender Equality Forum. I am Theresa Yeh, currently serving on the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Women's Rights Promotion and Development, which hosts this year's EAGEF Forum. It is my great honor and privilege to be invited to speak a few words in the beginning of today's event. First of all, I would like to ask all of you to join me in expressing our gratitude for the hard-working organizers and staff behind the scenes to make it possible for today. Please lend me your hands to applaud for them. [To Staff: Thank you so much for your work.]

Dear friends and distinguished guests, today we gather here to celebrate the gender equality progress we have achieved in the East Asian region. And we focus on the digital technology and its impact upon the status quo. Technology brings hope and development potential. Internet and social media platforms have disseminated a huge amount of knowledge and have forged and reinforced a wide range of relationships. Yet, our time has become an age of misinformation and online abuses. Digital technology, in fact, also brings us frustration, humiliation, resulting in all kinds of personal freeze and fear. This is particularly true to women and

girls in our region where patriarchal ideology still deeply roots in our cultures where the collective impact inevitably contributes to the overall silencing of women, girls, and sexual minorities.

For those of us who are digital immigrants, we can shun the cyber impact by avoiding the small screens and hide behind paper and TV sets. But for those who are digital natives, they have no choice but to continue enduring dwelling in the cyberspace even after harm and tears inflicted on them because the digital world is their source of information, their source of entertainment, and their source of inspiration. Most importantly, their sphere of living. What is imperative for us today is to collaborate to stop the technology-facilitated gender-based discrimination, hate speech, and violence against women, girls, and sexual minorities. So, everyone can enjoy the benefits of the digital age, especially the promise of work-life integration in a tech-savvy society as we shall witness in Panel two.

Digital right is human rights, not privilege for a certain group of people. Gender equality is human rights, not privilege for any marginalized groups. We have seen the recent development in the international community – gradually pulling the digital dimension onto the front burner. In 2021, we have seen the Istanbul Convention Committee GREVIO General Comment No. 1 on Cyber Violence. Last year, we also have seen the Children’s Rights Committee’s General Comment No. 25 on young people’s rights in cyber environment. I believe we will learn about some of the measures adopted by large social media platforms

and young opinion leaders on the internet to gear toward these international frameworks in our afternoon panel.

Dear friends and Distinguished guests, when someone feels life holds no more for them, let us reach out and uphold them offline and online so that no one is left behind in the digital age. We have no magic wands like Hermione Granger or Harry Potter. But we are sure of one thing. We are the defenders of human rights. We are the defenders of common good.

On the 11th (eleventh) day of the 11th (eleventh) month of the 22nd (twenty-second) year of the century, (eleven plus eleven equals twenty-two), the Foundation for Women's Rights Promotion and Development, with the Open Society Foundation, formally launches the East Asia Gender Equality Forum, an opportunity to share our good practices and to grow together with our partners. It is our hope at the Foundation to continue this Forum in the years to come to bring the capabilities, expertise, and resolve we East Asians possess into full focus in order to respond to the many challenges corroding the gender equality progress across the region. So, we can, year by year, concert our efforts, cement our networking, and advance our shared vision for a safer, more equal East Asia. But, as an insight from Lao Tzu goes: A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Today is our first single step. At today's Forum, I am looking forward to learning from our decorated speakers from Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. I know we will all have a fruitful day. All is well that ends well.