Thank you. My name is Fiona Brown and I am speaking on behalf of the Major Group for Children and Youth. I would like to continue discussion on closing the gender gap in science and technology. There is profound gender inequity in digital access and education, which is amplified for those in lower income countries. UNICEF has reported that 90% of girls and young women in lower income countries are offline, and for every 100 male youth who have digital skills only 65 female youth have the same skills. This digital divide is a barrier that needs to be overcome for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I have benefitted from, and now volunteer with organizations and initiatives aiming to close the gender gap for education, skills and careers in ST&I. I have seen first hand the determination of the many young women innovating to create impact, find a home for themselves and other young women in ST&I. However, there is still more work to be done to create a more inclusive environment that will work to balance gender inequities. Youth and young women want a future in ST&I that welcomes us as equal and valued partners in achieving the Global Goals.

We call for high level policy makers to collaborate with youth constituencies to create programs and initiatives to address the digital divide and all related intersectional issues, building on the actions youth are already taking.
For example, in 2022, the Major Group for Children and Youth, collaborated with the UN Statistics Division to host the UN Big Data Hackathon. 300 teams of students, young professionals and data experts developed data-driven projects to address SDGs such as gender inequality. Only 30% of the participants were girls and women. This needs to grow.
To ensure girls and women have access to emerging technology would be the first step to giving women the skills they need to participate in the ST&I framework. Support is needed for women and girls in science and technology for their education, employment, and leadership.

Technology has the ability to significantly help us achieve the SDGs, but we need everyone to have the ability to acquire digital skills for life without socioeconomic barriers or digital divides. Thank you.