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It is a great honour to be with you here today. Thank you.

I want to talk about privacy as it relates to women and the role of Artificial Intelligence. Privacy, women and AI.

Privacy has always been a double-edged sword for women. Its definition is rooted in the private-public dichotomy, which has historically overlapped with the gender divide, with men occupying the public space and women relegated to the private sphere of the home.

However, women have long questioned, and are successfully dismantling, this private/public boundary. For women, private is not always good. Think of the long battles to get domestic abuse recognised as a crime. Think of other battles, still ongoing, around our reproductive rights, around menopause and childcare. In a sense, private areas – and yet, areas that cry out for strong public policies.

Debating and redefining the boundary between what should be public and private does not mean we abandon the protection of the individual. Quite the opposite. **Why? Technology and, more precisely, the ubiquity of data collection.**

Personal data is now collected at almost every moment of our lives, whether we are working or in our "free" time, shopping, browsing, travelling.

The availability of data, plus a staggering increase in computational power in a few short years, have unleashed what we call the Fourth Industrial Revolution, fuelled by AI.

And while AI has brought about many benefits, such as increased productivity and personalized healthcare, it has also too often compounded existing injuries to women, including inequality, exclusion, and bias.

Women are often more vulnerable to privacy violations, particularly those who are already marginalized. Think about the technology-enabled controls wrapped around those seeking benefits. Facial recognition technology and increased surveillance disproportionately target certain areas and communities.

The digital divide worsens exclusion: any talk of AI as some sort of magical or miracle solution fails to consider the reality of digital inequality.

We must never stop caring that AI risks perpetuating biases and encoding existing inequalities in new systems. For example, lenders have been caught out offering less credit to women customers thanks to uncritical use of algorithms.

Large numbers of immigrants who were eligible for benefits were cruelly denied them because of thoughtless, improperly monitored use of algorithmic decision-making.

When we take somewhat dusty data and feed it into machines that churn out decisions and predictions, we must never forget that data is not neutral. Data reflects back a picture of our society. with all its inequalities and injustice. UNESCO, in a recent report, made plain how large language models (LLMs) and generative AI (genAI) reinforce inequality and sexism.

As we embrace the enormous positive potential of AI and nail down some sensible norms and governance around it, it is essential that women are at the forefront of this discussion.

We must foster a stronger link between privacy and equality. Privacy is a great collective value. One does not need to have experienced an abortion personally to have care for the privacy of those who have, and to support those who are seeking one. This is why location data, the data that identifies where a person is, must be treated as very sensitive information. This is information that has been used to track women who use reproductive services, in order to punish them.

Data is not just numbers. Data is people. Data is women. Data is not just ours, but us. Of course data needs collecting. Of course we cannot identify or solve the great problems of the world without the data. But we must move towards new forms of engaging with and managing our data.

This means to think consent – real consent, as women know it. Consent cannot mean smothering us with incomprehensible, opaque privacy notices. Consent cannot mean hazing us with endless scrolls of tiny, tricksy tick boxes where you're not sure what means on and what means off, what means yes and what means no. That model of "consent" is simply a one way transaction – far from the meaningful consent we should exercise.

Last but not least, when we look at global governance of AI, we need to take into consideration the lived experiences of women for whom data collection by the state is even more worrying than data collection by private actors.

While there is no monolithic women's movement, there is a unity in our shared commitment to defeating inequality.

To ensure that AI helps us defeat inequality instead of coding it into software – we women must be in the driving seat.

Thank you.