Virtual Worlds and Online Games now play a large part in society and social past times; they are popular and mass culture. Women actively participate in various online environments and Virtual Worlds, forming a significant part of these communities.

However, Virtual Worlds provide a different space for people to inhabit. Cyberspace has traditionally been regarded as a lawless environment – as much for its jurisdictional difficulties and absence of regulation, as for its lack of physical nature. In recent years one could observe a sudden emergence and major growth of cybercrime, with particular rise in cyber stalking and cyber-harassment. What is particularly intriguing is that many of these crimes take a gender-based form, such as gender-based violence, sexual harassment or cyber-pornography, which primarily victimize women (or rather female avatars and characters).

Despite their prevalence cybercrimes, and gender-based cybercrimes in particular, remain unregulated. Where regulation occurs, it is largely in the form of Acceptable behaviour and Codes of Conduct. The difficulty then arises then with enforcement. Furthermore, various attempts at discussing the issue of misogyny in online environments and cybercrimes against women meet a strong, opposing and somewhat alarming response, such as one directed against Anita Saarkesian, a feminist games critic, blogger and the author of the Tropes v Women.

These recent developments and paint a rather alarming picture of the gender inequality in virtual worlds and prompt a question about the need for regulation of such behaviour in online environments and in virtual worlds.

The Ignite© (UN)CONFERENCE is designed to create an opportunity to discuss these pressing, contemporary issues in an informal, multidisciplinary environment. Our event will take a form of Ignite sessions which are designed to stimulate discussion and exchange of new ideas in a short period of time (http://igniteshow.com/). Presentations should be no longer than 10 minutes. After the Ignite sessions, separate sessions will be run to further explore these issues.

We are hoping to attract a range of participants from various backgrounds, who are interested in participating in this event and contributing to the discussion. You do not need to be a game player to join!

Please submit proposals of no more than 200 words including a brief biography and 3 keywords to Kim Barker (Birmingham Law School) and Olga Jurasz (Open University) at: virtualgender@gmail.com by 10 July 2013 and join the debate on twitter @VirtualGender.