

**Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work**

**Multi-Stakeholder Forum  
30 January 2017**

**United Nations Headquarters  
Report**

## **About CSW**

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by Council resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946.

The Commission has been instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and encouraging the United Nations system to incorporate a gender perspective in all areas of work. The Commission also contributes to the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

During the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of Member States, civil society organizations and entities of the United Nations system gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York. They discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality, as well as emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women. Member States agree on further action to be taken to accelerate progress and promote women's enjoyment of their rights in political, economic and social fields.

UN-Women supports all aspects of the work of the Commission. The Entity prepares the documentation for the session including forward-looking recommendations to further expand the global normative framework. It supports Member States in their deliberations and helps them reach consensus on further actions to be taken. And it supports Member States, at the national level, to follow-up and implement commitments made and agreements reached on gender equality and women's empowerment. UN-Women also facilitates the participation of civil society representatives in Commission meetings.

At its sixty-first session, from 13 to 24 March 2017, the Commission will discuss the following themes:

- Priority theme: "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work"
- Review theme: "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls"
- Focus area: "The empowerment of indigenous women"

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw61-2017>

## Summary

On 30 January 2017, UN-Women convened a Multi-Stakeholder Forum on '*Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work*'. The purpose of the Forum was to engage a range of stakeholders in the preparations for the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61). More specifically, the Forum aimed to raise awareness of existing commitments, and identify key areas and issues that should be considered by CSW61 in the context of its priority theme and ways for addressing those; create a platform for sharing approaches and strategies that bring results, and for highlighting areas that require enhanced consensus; and foster dialogue, build alliances and galvanize partnerships for action in support of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their human rights and for accelerating implementation of the expected outcomes of CSW61.

UN-Women Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Lakshmi Puri opened the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, followed by a video message from the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil). The opening was followed by four interactive panel discussions and a wrap-up/closing session. UN-Women and the International Labour Organization introduced the topics of the panel discussions. Permanent Representatives, Deputy Permanent Representatives, experts and representatives from civil society organizations participated as panelists and engaged in dialogue with participants in an interactive format guided by moderators. They highlighted good practices and key areas of further work with regard to the realization of women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, including women's right to work and rights at work.

The Multi-Stakeholder Forum generated momentum around the priority theme of CSW61. Participants voiced confidence that the open exchanges helped build a solid foundation for meaningful discussions at the forthcoming session of the Commission and mobilized stakeholders to engage effectively beyond CSW61 in achieving women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

A number of key messages in four areas emerged from the event:

### **Panel 1: Strengthening normative and legal frameworks for full employment and decent work for women**

Global legal and normative frameworks and instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization, as well as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, are critical for guiding the formulation and implementation of laws, policies and strategies that promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and women's human rights. The agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixtieth session set out a roadmap for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They affirmed that women's economic empowerment is essential for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Implementation of these global normative outcomes through national legal frameworks that address structural barriers and discrimination is of critical importance to ensure the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Discriminatory laws, which prevent women from realizing their rights, must be repealed where they exist.

There is a need to strengthen and enforce laws and workplace policies that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women, and efforts are needed to eliminate occupational segregation. Women who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization require targeted protection and existing laws should be strengthened and implemented. Laws and policies to eliminate violence and harassment against women in the workplace must also be strengthened and enforced.

National gender equality mechanisms have a key role to play in supporting progress for all women. They need to be strengthened to support and monitor the mainstreaming of gender perspectives across all areas of laws, policies and strategies, including labour and sustainable development strategies.

The private sector should play a more active role and be held accountable for compliance with labour laws. The Women's Empowerment Principles should be fully utilized for women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

The promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind and to reach those furthest behind first requires specific attention to the situation of women who are subject to multiple and intersecting forms of inequality and discrimination. Specific groups of women—young women, women with disabilities, women living in poverty, indigenous women, minority women, rural and urban women in poor communities, women migrants and refugees—should thus benefit from targeted action for full and equal access to decent work.

Monitoring, review and evaluation mechanisms are critical to guarantee effective, gender-responsive implementation of policies and to strengthen accountability of both public and private actors. Data disaggregated on a number of factors and gender statistics are crucial for the review of policies, the valuation of women's work and the understanding of issues faced by women and girls at different stages of their lives.

## **Panel 2: Strengthening women's leadership and participation in the changing world of work**

Women's economic empowerment requires political will and leadership. Partnerships of Government with workers' and employers' organizations to develop and implement labour policies that integrate gender equality perspectives should be fostered and expanded. More efforts are needed to support women's entrepreneurship.

Women's leadership and their full, effective and accelerated participation and equal representation at all levels of decision-making, including on corporate boards and in trade unions, is essential to achieve equal opportunities for women in both private and public sectors. Women have demonstrated their leadership in women's organizations and self-help groups, and they should be encouraged and supported in these roles.

The media, youth, men and boys, faith and traditional leaders also need to be engaged as agents of change and support gender equality and women's equal rights to work and rights at work.

## **Panel 3: Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment**

Gender-responsive laws need to be complemented by policy measures and strategies to accelerate women's economic empowerment in an enabling environment. Such efforts should in particular focus on

ensuring women's equal access to decent work and full and productive employment in the context of realizing SDG 8 and ending poverty, as called for in SDG1.

Well-designed and gender-responsive social protection and pension schemes, as well as infrastructure should be put in place and strengthened. Child and elder care services, paid maternity and parental leave schemes are essential for women to take advantage of economic opportunities. Universal healthcare, including reproductive health, educational opportunities and promotion of work-life balance have significant roles in ensuring women's economic empowerment.

Women's economic empowerment is greatly enabled by women's full and equal access, ownership and control over productive and financial resources.

There is a need to address gender stereotypes and social norms as those continue to constrain the ability of women to participate in the productive sector. Such stereotypes and norms can prevent women from seeking paid work, or confine them to insecure, informal and low-paying sectors. Steps are urgently needed to close the gender pay gap and include policies that ensure equal pay for work of equal value. Relevant laws and policies should be in place everywhere and implemented at all levels, and both private and public sectors should be held accountable.

Women's and girls' disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work should be recognized, reduced and redistributed to improve women's labour force participation and increased retention of girls in school. Unpaid care and domestic work should be recognized in national accounts and reflected in economic and social policies. Investment in the paid care economy can make significant contribution to gender equality and women's economic empowerment through expanding decent paid jobs in public and private sectors.

**Panel 4: Expanding opportunities for women in the changing world of work (i.e. the growing informality of work, technological change and mobility)**

Women are overrepresented in the informal sector. Women's working conditions in this sector need to be improved and opportunities sought to provide legal protection, extend social protection and make such employment more economically viable.

Gender-responsive education and training policies can have a positive impact on women's economic empowerment. They should aim to remedy occupational segregation and should expand opportunities for women in growing and emerging employment sectors. As technological and digital changes increasingly are shaping the future world of work, policies should promote women's and girls' participation in new and emerging fields, especially science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Equal access to technologies and information should also be fostered. The gap between women's and girls' educational attainment and employment opportunities need to be bridged.

Education systems need to be further strengthened, and should include education on gender equality and the rights of women and girls. Education is instrumental in combating discriminatory norms and stereotypes.

## **Annex 1: Programme of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum**

### **A. OPENING SESSION**

Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UN-Women

H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Chair (Brazil), Commission on the Status of Women (Video message)

### **B. PANEL DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Panel Discussion 1: Strengthening normative and legal frameworks for full employment and decent work for all women**

Moderator: Ms. Šejla Đurbuzović, Vice-Chair (Bosnia & Herzegovina), Commission on the Status of Women

Panelists:

H.E. Ms. Gillian Elizabeth Bird, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Jürgen Schulz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations

Mr. Olivier Marc Zehnder, Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

Ms. Sameera Hafiz, Advocacy Director, National Domestic Workers Alliance

#### **Panel Discussion 2: Strengthening women's leadership and participation in the world of work**

Moderator: H.E. Ms. Maria Emma Mejía Vélez, Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations

Panelists:

H.E. Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations

H.E. Mrs. Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of United Arab Emirates to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Jerry Matthews Matjila, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations

H.E. Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Jordan to the United Nations

Ms. Aruna Rao, Co-Founder/Executive Director, Gender at Work

#### **Panel Discussion 3: Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment**

Moderator: Ms. Christine Brautigam, Director, Intergovernmental Support Division, UN-Women

Panelists:

H.E. Mr. Virachai Plasai, Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Minami, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations

Ms. Katia Araujo, Director of Programs, Huairou Commission

#### **Panel Discussion 4: Expanding opportunities for women in the changing world of work (i.e. the growing informality of work, technological change and mobility)**

Moderator: Mr. Andreas Glossner, Vice-Chair (Germany), Commission on the Status of Women

Panelists:

H.E. Mr. Carlos Olgún Cigarroa, Deputy Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations

Mr. Bruno Ríos Sánchez, Second Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations

Ms. Monami Maulik, Member of the Steering Committee, Women in Migration Network

Ms. Eleanor Blomstrom, Co-Director/Head of Office, Women's Environment and Development Organization

### **C. WRAP-UP/CLOSING SESSION**

Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UN-Women