

Concept Note
Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on
“Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”
23 -24 February 2017, Bangkok, Thailand

1. Background

In accordance with its multi-year programme of work (2017-2020), the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2017 will consider **“Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”** as its priority theme. The Commission will consider the theme in the context of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (E/CN.6/2015/3), relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, WSIS global and regional action plans, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1).

In order to take stock of current research and assist the Commission in its deliberations, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in collaboration with members of the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism’s Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (TWG-GEEW), will convene an Policy Dialogue on “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” in Bangkok on 23 –24 February 2017. In its deliberations, the Policy Dialogue will be informed by the work in progress of the UN Secretary General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment and by the theme of the 2017 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world (A/70/L.60). The Policy Dialogue aims to:

- Examine the changing world of work and its challenges and opportunities for fostering greater economic empowerment and independence for women and girls;
- Identify policies and programmes that promote women’s economic empowerment, women’s right to work and rights at work along the continuum from informal to formal decent work;
- Explore roles and responsibilities of governments, international bodies, the private sector, including financial institutions and pension funds, workers’ and employers’ organizations, and civil society, including women’s organizations and gender equality advocates, in shaping and influencing the world of work;
- Develop action-oriented recommendations that support gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development based on the commitment to gender equality and women’s economic empowerment, and to the protection, promotion and realization of women’s and girls’ human and labour rights.

3. The Policy Dialogue will focus on the priority theme by assessing key issues such as:

- Enabling macroeconomic environments for employment creation and access to decent work for all
- Global gender gaps in work and employment
- Gendered pathways from unpaid to informal to formal decent work
- Care economy and paid and unpaid care and domestic work
- Social protection floors and measures
- Rights to form, join, and mobilize through trade unions
- Impact of technology on the world of work

Rapid advances in technology are changing the way the world works and the world of work, both as a consumer market in itself, as well as a factor of production. The disruptive impact of technologies can transform opportunities or widen inequalities. Where women have access to ICTs, they have shown innovation to use them to expand their businesses.¹ ICTs can bring efficiency gains not only in terms of financial returns and business expansion, but also in time and flexibility; a particular gain for women and their time poverty.

Nevertheless, as financial markets, production processes and consumer engagement shift onto digital platforms, those populations with limited infrastructure and resources to access these platforms risk being left further behind. For many women business owners in Asia-Pacific, the potential of ICTs are out of reach due to their lack of ICT know-how and equipment at various stages of the supply chain. Where women are participating in ICT sectors, for example, Business Process Outsourcing industries, the lack of rules and regulation expose them to exploitation and compromises in cyber security. The myriad impact of technology on the future of women's work must be taken into account if policies are to respond to and promote the needs of women.

A background paper on the future of work for women in Asia and the Pacific will be prepared to set the context for participants' deliberation of the priority theme of CSW 61. The report will provide an overview of key trends and issues across the broad themes outlined above. In particular, it will address the role of technology, among other factors, that will feature increasingly in the lives and world of work of women and men in Asia and the Pacific.

2. Purpose

The **overall objective** of the Policy Dialogue is to bring together representatives of National Women's Machinerys and Ministries of Labour, multi-lateral and bi-lateral partners in the Asia and Pacific region, practitioners and technical experts to explore state-of-the-art research and analysis, identify good practices and lessons learned, and develop policy recommendations on *"Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work"*.

Expected Outcome: The outcome of the Policy Dialogue will be a report, containing a summary of the discussions and recommendations. The report will be made available at the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on the website of UN Women and ESCAP, as well as those of other UN agencies and stakeholders as may be applicable.

¹ Women business owners who are focused on growing their enterprises have a strong appetite for introducing new ICT tools, A Survey On Women's Entrepreneurship And Innovation, UNCTAD, 2013, http://empretec.unctad.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/UNCTAD_DIAE_ED_2013_1.pdf

3. Participants

The Policy Dialogue will bring together experts and practitioners from a variety of fields, including academia, government (ministries labour and NWM's), practitioners and technical experts and United Nations or other regional and international organizations. In selecting the participants and experts, the criteria of geographical balance will be taken into consideration as will the objectives of the meeting.

4. Dates and Venue

The Policy Dialogue will take place on 23-24 February 2017, at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Bangkok.

5. Organization

- The Policy Dialogue will be jointly convened by UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and ESCAP, in collaboration with members of the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism's Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (TWG-GEEW)
- The Policy Dialogue will be conducted in English and all documentation will be in English.
- The Policy Dialogue will comprise plenary and working group sessions.
- Presentations by practitioners and technical experts in plenary will create the framework for discussions.
- Small working groups will be formed to discuss specific issues/themes and identify concrete policy and programme recommendations targeted at various stakeholders.

6. Provisional Agenda

23-24 February 2017

A. Opening of the meeting

1. Opening statements;
2. Overview and Adoption of the agenda;

B. Presentation of background paper "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work and technology in Asia-Pacific"

C. Current and projected macroeconomic landscape and its implications for women's work

D. The changing world of work: technology and its implications for productive and reproductive work

E. Formality, informality and social protection

F. The roles of policy, private partnerships and citizens.

G. Finalization of key recommendations from the Policy Dialogue.

H. Closing of Meeting