

Report on the Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work”

Bangkok, 23-24 February 2017



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

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I. Organization of the Meeting¹

1. The Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work” (forthwith “Policy Dialogue”), was held on the 23rd and 24th of February 2017 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok. It was jointly organized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) with the technical support and collaboration of the Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (TGW-GEEW).

2. The Policy Dialogue saw participation from high-level representatives from Ministries responsible for the advancement of gender equality and Ministries of Labour from 16 countries, along with experts and practitioners from the private sector, academia, trade unions, civil society organizations, intergovernmental organizations and the United Nations.

3. The Policy Dialogue discussed the gender-differential impact of regional trends on women’s ability to participate and lead in the workplace on par with men. Action-oriented recommendations were developed during the Policy Dialogue to turn the tide on gender inequality and ensure equal access to decent work for all. The [background paper](#) for the event served as key input to the deliberations. The recommendations made by participants at the meeting were intended to inform the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) in New York in March 2017, for which the priority theme was “women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”. The recommendations draw on the report of the Secretary-General: “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” (E/CN.6/2017/3), recent research and data from United Nations entities and other sources, including the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment. This document presents a summary of these recommendations in Section III.

¹ This report was prepared by Anna Eknor.

II. Proceedings

A. Opening of the Meeting and Setting the Stage

5. Opening remarks were made by Mr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of the Social Development Division of ESCAP and Ms. Miwa Kato, UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific. During his opening remarks, Mr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of the Social Development Division of ESCAP, underlined the importance of women's economic empowerment for the future economic development of the dynamic region of Asia-Pacific. He continued to underline the economic loss tied to underutilization of the female part of the labour force and the importance to invest in women's higher education to promote their participation in future high value jobs, including in technologically advanced sectors. Mr. Kumar also highlighted that women will bear the brunt of the negative impact of the changing world of work, for example through loss of jobs in feminized sectors. Inclusive macroeconomic policies are therefore crucial to ensure women's economic empowerment. In addition to this, Mr. Kumar stressed the importance of rectifying the gender pay gap and to increase social protection for all, including vulnerable groups such as women migrant workers and women workers in the informal sector.
6. During her opening remarks, Ms. Miwa Kato, UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, highlighted the wealth of diverse experiences of the region as well as the key role of linking women's economic empowerment with sustainable and inclusive growth in achieving a prosperous future world of work. She drew special attention to the Agenda 2030 and stressed that it would take 200 years to reach our gender equality goals at the current rate, and that the work for gender equality therefore must be strengthened. Ms. Kato stressed the need to put particular effort towards making economic growth work for women, referencing research showing an asymmetry in the two-way relationship between gender equality and economic growth. Evidence suggests empirical support for the claim that gender equality has a positive impact on economic growth, but the converse relationship is far more complex. For example, in spite of the country's strong economic growth, Female Labour Force Participation in India actually declined from 34.1 percent in 1999-00 to 27.2 percent in 2011-12. Underlining that women's inclusion in the future world of work is essential for our collective wellbeing and future economy, Ms. Kato also stressed the urgency of closing the gender gap and stated that while women are already disadvantaged, if nothing is done through policy and public decision making, the gender gap will increase. Also highlighted was the stagnation or in some cases reversal of women's economic empowerment in Asia-Pacific, with a call for further discussion on what impact this will have in terms of opportunities for women in the region.
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B. Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work

9. The first substantive session of the Policy Dialogue focused on the theme of the meeting: Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work. Decent work is key to women's economic empowerment and the last decades have witnessed women's entry into the labour force in an unprecedented fashion. However, in some of the fastest growing economies in Asia and the Pacific, the trend is reversing and women's labour force participation is actually decreasing. This calls for consideration of what the effects on women's economic empowerment will be if this trend continues. Highlighting decent work and women's labour force participation, the session explored possible implications for the region in the light of fast technological change, economic growth and climate change.
10. Ms. Jayati Ghosh, Economist and Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, and Executive Secretary of International Development Economics Associates (Ideas), presented the trends for women's economic empowerment in South and South-West Asia, discussed the definition of work and provided an overview on gender discrimination in the labour market for the sub-region. Ms. Ghosh highlighted that the employment challenge in a rapidly developing Asia, due to technological advancements displacing jobs, can be converted into an opportunity by emphasising public investment in care and formalizing care work, which improves aggregate labour productivity and enables increased participation of women in the paid workforce.
11. In his presentation on the future of work in Asia-Pacific, Mr. Francisco Cos-Montiel, Regional Advisor on Women's Economic Empowerment at UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, provided another perspective on the matter of the future of care work. He argued that there is a need for policy makers to ensure that women will not primarily be funnelled into the care sector in the future as the labour market changes, but to promote a gender equal distribution of care work and promote women's participation in sectors that will benefit from technological advancement. Mr. Cos-Montiel also stressed the need for inclusive growth as well as an inclusive digital society, underlining that women and girls are lagging behind men in terms of being underrepresented in the ICT field and lacking internet access, a disadvantage that will soon multiply due to rapid technological developments and subsequent increased demands for technological skills.
12. The concept of a universal social wage was discussed and emphasised as an important issue for recognizing unpaid work. The case of India was highlighted, where a universal social wage has been discussed as an alternative for public spending on health care. It was however observed that such a model would be disadvantageous when replacing public spending, and that it instead should be used to expand public spending as a complement to existing public expenditure.

13. It was noted that gender equality concerns need to more efficiently dealt with fiscally and through labour policies in order to provide incentives for women to enter and remain in the labour force. Vocational trainings and availing of childcare facilities were highlighted as key interventions to promote women's labour force participation.
14. Regional consumerism and the focus on economic growth as the ultimate measurement of development was discussed in relation to detrimental environmental repercussions, and it was emphasised that there is an urgent need to shift the focus from economic growth to sustainable development. It was also noted that the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provide a very useful alternative to the singular goal of economic growth, as it highlights sustainability and inclusiveness anchored in the guiding principle for the 2030 Agenda of "leaving no one behind".

C. Pathways for Women's Economic Empowerment: Employment, Entrepreneurship and Social Protection

15. The second substantive session of the Policy Dialogue discussed pathways for women's empowerment, emphasizing women's employment, entrepreneurship and social protection. The session highlighted that employment and entrepreneurship opportunities and a good social protection system are key to women's economic empowerment. This session also discussed regional opportunities and obstacles to translate benefits of growth into decent work opportunities for women, overall finding this to be a challenge.
16. In his presentation, Mr. Sher Verick, ILO Deputy Director of the Decent Work Team for South Asia, provided an overview of the transforming landscape for women's work in the region. He stressed that promoting opportunities and choice for women to work outside the home will go a long way towards achieving SDG 8 on decent work and inclusive growth and called for more research is needed on policy solutions to promote participation and access to decent work. Mr. Verick paid particular attention to the region's female labour force participation (FLFP) rate, highlighting that the FLFP has decreased or remained stagnant in spite of strong economic growth and rising education, which sets Asia apart from other regions. Some of the key factors behind constraining FLFP in the region were stated to be gendered labour segregation, discriminatory social gender norms and lack of jobs or limited job creation. Mr. Verick further emphasised the importance of considering the individual trajectory of each country in this regard.
17. Joni Simpson, Senior Gender Specialist at the ILO, presented on women in entrepreneurship with a focus on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). She highlighted that women in entrepreneurship is growing and currently makes up around 30 percent of business owners globally. However, only a small portion of these

entrepreneurs can create jobs, Ms. Simpson continued, as women are concentrated in low entry, small, self-employed businesses. When more women lead enterprises, they tend to create more productivity and hire more women, but women entrepreneurs face similar constraints as women do overall in the labour force, including lack of access to finances and constraining social norms. Ms. Simpson also underlined the potential of ICTs to connect women entrepreneurs with markets in order to enable them to grow their businesses.

18. In her presentation about violence against women (VAW), Ms. Anna-Karin Jatfors, Deputy Regional Director, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, emphasised that while this is foremost a human rights issue that affects 1 in 3 women and girls globally, it is also an economic issue, which carries significant costs to individuals, households, the public sector, businesses, and society. The economic costs of VAW have been estimated at between 1.2 percent and 3.7 percent of GDP, and women who face violence tend to have lower earnings in part because it constrains their mobility and undermines their education and access to employment. Ms. Jatfors highlighted that women's empowerment can reduce the risk of violence by improving women's financial autonomy, bargaining power and self-esteem. On the other hand, by disrupting or challenging traditional gender roles, women's economic empowerment can also result in a backlash from intimate partners, family members or communities. The importance of understanding social norms as an important part of women's economic empowerment was underlined and employers were urged to introduce domestic violence and sexual harassment policies.
19. The role of trade unions in addressing the gender wage gap and growing inequality was emphasised and the Policy Dialogue participants connected weakening trade unions with increased gender wage gaps. The importance of female representation in trade unions was stressed and highlighted as a major challenge for South and East Asia in particular.
20. Lack of access to finance, land and property was observed to be a type of violence against women. A way to combat this was to use markets as entry points to strengthen women's access to finance, and to ensure support for women to access their own birth certificates and other documentation needed to access for example land titles. Social and solidarity economies were also highlighted by the Policy Dialogue participants as an interesting area for new models of inclusive development.

D. Emerging Issues Affecting Women's Paid and Unpaid Work: Demographics, Care and Climate Change

21. The third substantive session of the Policy Dialogue focused on changing demographics, care work and the impact of climate change on women's economic opportunities and care work. Women are at the crossroads of production and reproduction. For that reason, it is not possible to address the productive aspects of

women's economic empowerment without taking into account the dimension of social reproduction. The impact of changing demographics, the burden of care and climate change, all have an impact on women's reproductive work with a direct impact on their ability to engage in paid work.

22. In his presentation, Mr. Gavin Jones from Australian National University provided an overview of the changing demographics in Asia-Pacific. He underlined that while there are vast differences between countries and sub-regions, a key area of stress throughout Asia is the stress the traditional "care" function of the family is under. Opportunities for women are changing in the face of resistance to change in social norms about women's roles, facing many women with the balancing act of how to benefit from opportunities in the labour force while also raising a family. It was also observed that migrant domestic workers often are of vital importance in countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan, enabling many middle class women to work by caring for their families.
23. Jocelyn Villanueva, Regional Change Lead-Women's Economic Empowerment at Oxfam, provided an overview of care work in the Asia-Pacific region, especially highlighting the undervaluing and lack of recognition of care work. She also stated that unpaid care work imposes a systematic time-tax on women, stressing that unequal care responsibilities are a fundamental driver of gender inequality. In this way, it is a systemic transfer of hidden subsidies to the rest of the economy that go unrecognized although it leads to lower labour costs, increased profits and increased process of accumulation. Ms. Villanueva furthermore underlined that investing in care is a critical precondition for advancing women's rights and provided an outline of a four-pronged approach to changing patterns of care work: 1) recognise care work; 2) reduce difficult, inefficient tasks; 3) redistribute responsibility for care more equitably - from women to men, and from families to the state/employers; and 4) represent carers in decision making.
24. The impact of climate change on women's work was discussed during the Policy Dialogue. Ms. Kate Lappin, Regional Coordinator at the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, provided an overview of this topic and emphasised that climate change will have an enormous impact on women's economic empowerment in the future. Climate change induced crises and degradation increases inequality, migration, discriminatory practices and the burden of unpaid work, which are disproportionately carried out by women. By mitigating successively harsher conditions, women's unpaid labour tend to absorb the shock of climate change. It was observed that the Asia-Pacific region is particularly vulnerable to climate change due to the large number of high-risk countries across the region. On this note, the need for a just and equitable transition from dirty to sustainable industries with the potential to provide decent work opportunities was stressed.

25. It was observed by the Policy Dialogue participants that women and vulnerable population groups, in particular persons with disabilities, are the most vulnerable to the harmful effects of climate change and are disproportionately impacted.
26. The importance of transitioning from coal energy was observed, as well as the need to support the process with research as to ensure that women will benefit equally from the connected economic empowerment opportunities. Concern was however expressed by the Policy Dialogue participants about women losing out in this process, unless efforts are put towards effective policy work on this matter.
27. It was noted by the Policy Dialogue participants that challenging mainstream economic thinking and models is important in order to arrive at the most effective macroeconomic policy. The region's poverty in regard to tax revenues was also highlighted. There is more wealth than ever in the region, but it does not reach marginalised groups or even the greater part of the region's population because of economic inequalities with a small percentage of the wealthiest individuals and because a part of the wealth is kept in offshore bank accounts and is not being taxed.

E. Technological Change and its Impact on Women's Economic Empowerment

28. The focus of the fourth substantive session of the Policy Dialogue was the impact of technological change in the future world of work on women's economic opportunities and empowerment. The session highlighted that while the current trends and innovations in digital technology and finance are promising, the poorest women must not be left behind.
29. Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Chief of UNESCAP's ICT and Development Section, provided an overview of the gender digital divide in Asia-Pacific and highlighted ways forward to bridge the divide. It was noted that the share of women working in ICT sector is low at 33 percent globally, and even though internet penetration has increased almost seven-fold from 6.5 percent to 43.4 percent of the global population, only 36.9 percent of the total population of countries in the Asia-Pacific region is connected to internet, compared to 82.3 percent in the developed countries in 2015. The region displays the highest gender digital divide among all the regions in the world. In this regard, Ms. Okuda elaborated on the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative as an overarching framework that could also support gender equality. The AP-IS aims to increase the availability and affordability of broadband internet across Asia-Pacific, by strengthening the underlying internet infrastructure in the region.
30. In his presentation, Mr. Anshul Sonak, Regional Director at Intel Technology Asia Pte Ltd, shared his corporate experience and insights on the emerging labour needs in a rapidly technologically advancing future. He underlined that this moment in time is marked by a dramatic shift in our relationship to technology - a fourth industrial revolution characterised by the fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines

between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. This has implications for the future labour force, as workers will need to navigate a rapidly shifting landscape of technological skill requirements. As women are concentrated in low-tech and low-end jobs, their jobs are disappearing at the fastest rate, hence it is even more important to prepare women with digital and technology skillsets fit for future jobs. Mr. Sonak also emphasised the important role education plays in ensuring the future skill needs in the labour market and urged governments and policy makers to consider the full range of skills their citizens will require in the changing world of work.

31. Women account for 40-50 percent of agricultural workers in East and South-East Asia and 30 percent in South Asia. Labour-saving technologies in agriculture is therefore an aspect of women's economic empowerment, as emphasised by Ms. Mayling Flores Rojas, Agricultural Officer at the FAO, in her presentation. Ms. Rojas highlighted that the work of rural women is characterized by drudgery and by multiple and simultaneous activities (home and childcare, farming, community work) and that they thus face a triple work burden. It was furthermore observed that women have limited access and control over productive resources such as land, decision-making as well as financial and extension services, information and technology. Ms. Rojas called for governments and policy makers to invest in technologies that are adapted to women's needs; to promote interdisciplinary approaches, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and sex disaggregated data collection; and to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment into policies and strategies at national and regional level.
32. Ms. Soma Dutta, programme coordinator at the international network on gender and sustainable energy ENERGIA, focused on women's entrepreneurship in the renewable energy sector in her presentation. Particular attention was also paid to access to clean cooking, which is a part of SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy. More than 4.3 million deaths every year, mostly among women and children, are linked to fumes from fuels used for cooking and heating and the number of people lacking access to clean cooking energy is increasing, as efforts to improve access are lagging behind population growth rates. Ms. Dutta furthermore highlighted that while women are underrepresented in the energy sector overall, making up 20-25 percent of the labour force, they represent around 35 percent in the renewable energy sector. Ms. Dutta underlined that studies show that women reinvest 90 percent of their income in their families and communities, while men reinvest 30 to 40 percent, thus in addition to the intrinsic value of women's empowerment and environmental benefits, promoting women's entrepreneurship in renewable energy has multiple gains in promoting overall family and community wellbeing as women tend to reinvest in social goods.
33. In her presentation, Ms. Wandee K. Juljarern, CEO of SPCG PCL, shared her insights about green technology. She highlighted the importance of solar farms in reducing greenhouse gases for the benefit of future generations, as well as the need to eliminate coal and nuclear energy, and urged governments and policy makers to promote the use of green energy sources.

34. Ms. Shannon Kalyayanamitr, founder and group Chief Marketing Officer at Orami, an online commercial and lifestyle platform for products for women, shared her experience with the Policy Dialogue participants in her presentation, which focused on how technology can be an empowering tool for women entrepreneurs in Asia- Pacific. Ms. Kalyayanamitr underlined that today's rapidly developing technologies pose an abundance of opportunities for women to partake as entrepreneurs, but that there is a lack of resources being invested in women. The software industry has created a great amount of new and diverse jobs, which in turn have led to new managerial structures and with that new structural challenges. Because the tech sector is growing so rapidly, women's opportunities are often put on the back burner. Ms. Kalyayanamitr emphasised that systems and resources need to be put into place for women in the tech world, including help and support with regards to workplace harassment, encouragement for women who speak out against harassment, as well as structures for mentorships. She also underlined that this is especially needed because of the harsh and aggressive culture generally pervading the industry and due to recent allegations of sexual harassment in successful start-ups.
35. It was noted that the top 1 percent is getting richer faster than ever before and that this economic divide is hugely harmful as well as expected to increase. The impact of technological change on the world of work within countries and across the globe will depend on how productivity gains are distributed between economic and social groups. It was highlighted by the Policy Dialogue participants that this is particularly important as today's technological innovation is taking place when overall income inequality has already reached a historic high. It was furthermore underlined that it is necessary to facilitate the diffusion of new technologies and create a market environment where the most productive firms are allowed to thrive, thereby facilitating the more widespread penetration of available technologies in order to sustain productivity growth.
36. It was observed by the Policy Dialogue participants that half of the richest 8 men are in the tech industry, and the question of how these major players are contributing to the common good was raised. On this note, the issue of the lacking social expenditure in many countries in the region was also highlighted.
37. The Policy Dialogue participants noted that a key issue of the changing world of work is the exacerbating effect the digital divide has for marginalised and poor groups, as the digital divide keeps them from gaining ICT and tech skills while they are also pushed out from jobs in sectors that are becoming more technologically advanced because of the lack of ICT and tech skills. Manual jobs are among those disappearing at the fastest rate and skills that are easy to test are those that will be easiest to replace by new technologies. It was highlighted by the Policy Dialogue participants that there is therefore a need to focus education on problem solving and general tech skills, as these are the skills that will be in high demand in the future.

38. The challenge of keeping up with properly measuring and analysing evidence and progress in technologically advanced sectors such as renewable energy was highlighted by the Policy Dialogue participants, because they are growing so rapidly. It was noted that with regards to women's economic empowerment in the tech industry, scorecards on how women fare in the industry would be beneficial to tracking and better understanding women's progress in such sectors.
39. The importance of women migrant workers' access to mobile phones was stressed by the Policy Dialogue participants. It is common for employers, in particular those employing women migrant domestic workers, to prevent women migrant workers to have their own mobile phones or to have access to them. The Policy Dialogue participants stressed that access to a mobile phone should be seen as a right, as it is often indispensable to accessing services and aid that are fundamental to ensure one's human rights.

F. The Role of the Private Sector in Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment

40. The fifth substantive session of the Policy Dialogue discussed the role of the private sector in accelerating and promoting women's economic opportunities and empowerment. The pertinence of this topic is underlined by that the private sector, comprised of large, medium, small and microenterprises is the main employer in Asia and the Pacific.
41. Ms. Kannika Jarusuraisin, External Relations Director for Procter & Gamble (P&G) Thailand, Myanmar and Laos, provided an overview of private sector initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment. She underlined that media presence is key to raising awareness about social and environmental issues, issues which often intersect such as access to safe water. The social and cultural norm aspects of women's economic empowerment were also highlighted as the need to promote role-models for women to feel that it is possible for them to advance in their workplace, and in other ways be economically empowered, was emphasised. Ms. Jarusuraisin also emphasised the importance of working with people affected by multiple vulnerabilities, such as women with disabilities, and thus highlighted the need to consider intersectionality.
42. In her presentation, Ms. Emma Tiaree, Regional Strategic Partnerships Director at CARE, stressed that the private sector is integral to development and provided illustrative examples of successful projects delivered through joint efforts of the international labour community, local labour organisations, media, the private sector and civil society organisations. She underlined that the buying power of global brands to influence local action should not be underestimated, and that in many cases this has proved to be the most effective way for civil society organisations to gain access to

dialogue with industries and workers. It was also noted that private sector actors also benefit from corporate social responsibility and corporate accountability, as it expands the customer base and promotes local stability.

43. Ms. Anna Lee Tuvera, Senior Officer at the International Trade Union Confederation-Asia Pacific, and Ms. Nazma Akter, Executive Director at the AWAJ Foundation, both provided the Policy Dialogue with presentations on women's work in Asia-Pacific and emphasised the pivotal role trade unions have in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace. Ms. Akter underlined that women workers are more vulnerable to gendered workplace violence without effective union representation, and provided examples from the garment industry in Bangladesh. In addition to this, Ms. Tuvera emphasised the importance of ensuring women's social protection by collectively bargaining with governments through trade unions. It was furthermore noted that investing in care makes economic sense as well as social sense, as it boosts employment, ensures improved care for children and the elderly, and is more effective in reducing public deficits and debt than austerity policies.
44. The Policy Dialogue participants emphasised the importance of corporate social responsibility and corporate accountability, but also critiqued complacency with such efforts without challenging the deep rooted, structural problems, which keep wages down and working conditions poor. As women are concentrated in low paid jobs, this is an issue of gender equality and women's economic empowerment in particular.

G. Review of Recommendations

45. The focus of the sixth and last substantive session was for the participants to jointly identify and agree on recommendations to inform the CSW61 in New York in March 2017. A summary of the final recommendations is presented in section III.

III. Summary of Recommendations

46. The recommendations presented in this section are anchored in the theme of women's rights to and at work, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and several International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, including the ILO declaration on fundamental principles on human rights, for all work and workers without regard to sex, nationality, race, disability, employment, migration status and all social diversities.
47. Women's economic empowerment and the realization of women's rights to and at work are essential for the achievement of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (see E/CN.6/2015/3), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related resolutions such as UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Of particular relevance is Sustainable Development Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls as well as Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10 and 16, with focus on human rights frameworks and responding to the call for action to leave no one behind. The sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women provided a road map for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that highlights the significance for women's economic empowerment of decent work, full and productive employment and equal pay for work of equal value. These commitments are also reflected in recent normative milestones, including the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (see FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1) and the New Urban Agenda (A/CONF.226/4) and the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020.
48. Realizing women's economic empowerment requires transformative, structural change. However, the Asia-Pacific region is faced with increasing pressure and challenges, including the concentration of wealth in fewer hands, a regression of women's rights in some countries and competing priorities, such as climate change. Innovative measures are required to overcome these barriers and ensure women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

Key Recommendations

- A. Strengthening normative and legal frameworks for full employment and decent work for all women**

- R.1 Reaffirm the central importance of, and consider ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, with particular references to articles 1, 4, 11, 13 and 15, and relevant ILO conventions and recommendations. In particular, consider ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions 100 on equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value, 111 on discrimination (employment and occupation), 189 on Domestic Workers, 177 on Home Work, and 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour; ILO Recommendations 202 that calls for universal social protection floors and 204 concerning the transition from informal to formal economy; and the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, recognise and support CEDAW General Recommendations No. 34 on the rights of rural women, and No. 26 on the legal protection of migrant women workers. In addition, support the proposed ILO Convention on ending all forms of violence in the workplace, promote mandatory zero-tolerance on work place harassment and ensure that redress mechanisms are in place. In addition, the commitments to the SDGs including goals 5, 8, 1.3, 1.4, 10 and 16 foster intersectionality, stimulate coordinated action and track meaningful transformation in labour markets for women.
- R.2 Promote and implement labour laws that improve the decision-making power, bargaining power and position of women in labour markets.
- R.3 Remove barriers and constraints that restrict women from entering the labour force and from developing, leading and managing enterprises, such as discriminatory laws and regulations, lack of access to finances, and cultural norms.
- R.4 Recognize and protect the rights of women workers, labour and human rights activists and defenders, as well as worker's organisations that include informal workers, from suppression and retaliation.
- R.5 Recognise formal and informal workers' need for access to social protection, including occupational injury, disability insurance, paid sick leave, occupational health and safety, health, pension, and unemployment provisioning.
- R.6 Ensure the portability of social protection, social security and labour rights, across sectors and national borders.
- R.7 Combat constraining norms and attitudes towards women studying and working with ICTs and other technologies by promoting positive images of women in electronic, print, and audio-visual media.
- R.8 Promote the value of work by workers in the care sector and the skills required, including through national advocacy campaigns to address cultural norms and

attitudes. In particular, protect the labour and human rights of care workers, including by ensuring their fair wages and social protection.

- R.9 In line with the Paris agreement, take action to address climate change and respect, protect and promote women and girls' human rights.
- R.10 Support the elaboration of the binding instrument proposed by the Human Rights Council resolution on regulating transnational corporations in the context of human rights – whilst also ensuring that this instrument addresses violations against women's rights.
- R.11 Undertake concerted and immediate efforts to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV) in the world of work, recognizing that this violence increase gender inequality, denies women workers voice and agency and imposes economic costs on women, families and economies.
- R.12 Build a robust and gender-inclusive labour rights inspection, monitoring and adjudication system capable of identifying and remediating gendered labour rights violations, such as gender-based violence in the world of work and discrimination, while ensuring that it operates separately from immigration enforcement.

B. Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment

- R.13 Enact macroeconomic, monetary and fiscal policies that promote and support decent work and full employment for women and men, which are in line with international human and labour rights standards at the regional and national levels. In addition, ensure that trade policies and agreements support the sustainable development goals and respect women's rights in particular and human rights in general.
- R.14 Expand and reprioritize fiscal expenditures to foster significant investment in social protection and care infrastructure and support for the productive capacity of informal economy workers and women across other sectors, including in agriculture, enterprises or in formal employment. In particular, invest in human capital in Lower Income Countries and Middle Income Countries to enable workers to move higher up on the global supply chain, and raise basic floor rates for wages towards a minimum living wage.
- R.15 Recognize that remittances create fiscal space for home governments and link this fiscal space to state obligations to invest in care and resolve care deficits exacerbated by migration.
- R.16 Enact policies that support women's enterprise development in the context of decent work which will include financial inclusion of women, sectoral policies

that unlock credit, including but not limited to micro-credit, training to enhance attitudes, skills and knowledge for confidence-building, positive government procurement commitments and access to markets for women's enterprises.

- R.17 Support women's equal right to inheritance, right to own and use land, including collective and usufruct rights to land and common property and implement actions based on Free Prior and Informed Consent, as well as access to, and control over finance and other resources.
- R.18 Recognize the importance of care for individual and collective wellbeing as well as for national economies, and urge that the following actions be taken:
- a. Ensure that unpaid care work and social reproduction are fully integrated into the formulation and evaluation of macroeconomic policies.
 - b. Recognize, reduce, redistribute and respect care work between the market and the state and among men and women, including by collecting accurate disaggregated time use information on paid and unpaid work in national statistical systems, and implementing policies that support the equal distribution in the household of the provision of care.
- R.19 Promote policies to ensure equal pay for work of equal value, access to paid maternity and paternity leave and parental benefits including for adoptive families, and regulate hours and ensure work-life balance.
- R.20 Prioritise labour market access for older women and first-time female entrants to the labour market, by ensuring that they have access to appropriate education, technical and vocational skills; and opportunities for accessing high productivity and high pay sectors.
- R.21 Build human capital of all women as a long term economic investment, whilst ensuring the safety and health of girls in educational facilities at all levels.
- R.22 Whilst ensuring the full and seamless integration of informal economy workers in urban spaces, urban planning, particularly in developing countries, should ensure supportive and safe spaces and facilities for the economic activities of informal economy workers, without reinforcing their segregation.
- R.23 Eradicate all forms of bonded labour, whilst also ensuring compensation and justice for anyone whose labour has not been properly rewarded during their lifetime.
- R.24 Ensure that physical infrastructure and workplaces are accessible for all women, including safe toilet facilities for women, child care and breastfeeding rooms.

- R.25 Develop and implement evidence-based policies addressing gendered impacts of macroeconomic policies, including trade mispricing, under-invoicing and specific trade and investment agreements including their effects on unpaid work, gender wage gaps, labour market segregation, women's access to decent work, women's access to and control over productive resources and economic decision-making at home, at work, nationally and globally.
- R.26 Enhance the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data to inform and monitor the impact of policies and programs within and beyond national boundaries, including within the context of the SDGs.
- R.27 Carry out further research to examine the gender imbalance in unpaid care work, and the impact of gender-based violence on women workers. In addition, encourage efforts to create market indicators for unpaid care work.

C. Strengthening women's collective voice, leadership and decision-making

- R.28 Protect civil, political, socio-economic and cultural rights including the right to freedom of association, assembly and speech, and the right to organize and collectively bargain, which allow women activists, women workers and women's organizations to organize unions and other collectives and be decision-makers in economic policies that affect their work.
- R.29 Support the formation and growth of trade unions, particularly in women-dominated sectors, including the membership and leadership of women in trade unions. In particular, support tripartite engagement between policy makers, employers and women workers and their unions, organisations and allies to redress the particular systemic discrimination that women workers face.
- R.30 Provide legal recognition of informal workers, domestic workers and informal workers' organizations—such as unions, cooperatives and voluntary associations—by creating an enabling environment for their registration, and recognizing their right to participation in tripartite fora.
- R.31 Facilitate integration of gender equality issues in the Asia-Pacific regional network of trade unions, in order to enable them to monitor, share good practices and give input on ways to promote gender equality in the workplace.
- R.32 Ensure that mechanisms are in place to prioritise the safeguarding of women's rights, such as fast tracking labour tribunals to address violations against women workers' rights.
- R.33 Ensure women's leadership and gender balance in decision-making at all levels, especially pertaining to economic policy, programs and services including

corporate boards, central banks, international financial institutions and governance mechanisms pertaining to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and development banks, and the World Trade Organisation, including increasing the focus on gender equality through, for example the promotion of gender ambassadors in business institutions.

- R.34 Support women cooperatives and women's groups as successful fora for entrepreneurship and access to loans and savings.

D. Addressing the mobility of women workers and particular needs of indigenous and rural women and girls

- R.35 Enforce laws to protect the human rights of, and ensure the decent work for, migrant workers, laws against trafficking and against forfeiture of their assets.
- R.36 Encourage bilateral agreements between countries of origin and destination in recognition of women's labour and human rights, gender equality and social protection.
- R.37 Promote freedom of movement, safe migration and work choice for women and men of different skill groups.
- R.38 Regulate the role of private intermediaries and labour brokers in migration, including eliminating recruiting fees for migrant women.
- R.39 Promote networks of migrant women workers to support the exchange information on legal frameworks and share experiences of living and working in destination countries, as well as support the collective organisation of migrant workers to demand and protect their full labour rights.
- R.40 Ensure adequate measures are taken to protect the rights of, and support the reintegration of returning women migrant workers.
- R.41 Support the economic activities of rural and indigenous women by consulting with them and taking their traditional knowledge into account, so as to enhance their equal access to productive resources and agricultural inputs, as well as to ensure their representation and leadership in national and global policymaking.
- R.42 Ensure access of rural and indigenous women to legal redress mechanisms, assistance and services.
- R.43 Improve collection and analysis of information and data of women belonging to all marginalized groups, including in indigenous and rural communities.

R.44 Protect and strengthen the legal protection of child workers, providing for a minimum age for admission to employment, appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment, and appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of those policies. Furthermore, take all measures to protect children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

E. Managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment

R.45 Ensure access and participation for women and girls to STEM education, promote transition into employment of women into ICT sectors, and facilitate the reskilling of women to ensure their employability in order that they benefit equally from technological advancements and to prevent defeminisation of sectors.

R.46 Promote technological interventions that reduce women's disproportionate care burdens to promote women's economic empowerment. In particular, provide women with technological tools to be used in unpaid or care work that can enhance her health as well as promote ecological lifestyles, such as smokeless cooking equipment.

R.47 Bridge the technological gap between urban and rural areas, including promotion of women friendly-technology transfer, training and access to innovation, as well as through mobilisation of civil society organizations.

R.48 Enhance the number of women working in, and providing, ICT-related services, such as mobile operator services, technological dealerships, in particular in agricultural sectors.

R.49 Enhance the capacity of women entrepreneurs to use technology to enhance their efficiency and productivity, such as creating a portal for entrepreneurship.

R.50 Promote access to mobile technology as a right for migrant women workers and other women who may be denied access due to poverty, remote location or other reasons.

R.51 Promote the use of ICTs to ensure stronger safeguards and protection mechanisms for women against violence and abuse everywhere, including the workplace. In addition, combat online harassment, cyber bullying and other cyber threats to the security of women and girls, and protect the online rights to data protection, privacy, freedom of speech.

- R.52 Ensure that life-saving technologies, including technology for use in early warning systems, is accessible by all women, especially in rural and remote areas.

F. Addressing impact of climate change on women's economic empowerment

- R.53 Ensure gender-responsive implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and its commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in all appropriate countries.
- R.54 Develop and finance gender-responsive strategies to prevent, mitigate and manage the impact of climate change and its related disasters in line with international and regional agreements.
- R.55 Ensure that the transition to low-carbon economies incorporates a just and equitable transition of the workforce by encouraging productive technological change in support of decent work in the public and private sector for women, especially in the area of climate change mitigation and adaptation. In this regard, recognise that a just and equitable transition to low carbon economies may support decent work opportunities for women, while redistributing care work.
- R.56 Ensure that women and their organisations are meaningfully involved and engaged in climate change and disaster management discussions, in particular, through women's leadership.
- R.57 Regulating industries to address the impact that climate change and land degradation has on the economy and women's economic empowerment and rights.
- R.58 Promote investment in clean, environmentally friendly and gender-sensitive technology to scale up women's livelihoods, entrepreneurship and employment, and enhance agricultural and marine economy and eco-tourism outputs through robust value addition, access to market and cooperatives.

G. Strengthening role of private sector and other social actors in women's economic empowerment

- R.59 Strengthen the UN guiding principles on business and human rights to make them more gender-responsive and strengthen their implementation. In addition, ensure that ISO 26000 on social responsibility is applied across all private sector activity.
- R.60 Promote mandatory implementation of employment and labour standards at companies and organisations of all sizes and their outsourcing branches. Furthermore, strengthen and monitor regulation of the global supply chain and

businesses to promote decent work for women, including promoting transparency and ethical labelling on private sector products.

- R.61 Promote progressive taxation of multinational banks in order to redistribute resources towards women's empowerment. In this regard, support the momentum around global and regional tax bodies to help ensure sharing and tracking of global tax information.
- R.62 Encourage private sector businesses to invest in women's technological skills development through their core budgets, such as human resources development budget, in addition to corporate social responsibility budgets. In this regard, whilst noting the importance of corporate social responsibility on all business levels, corporate social responsibility should not replace public investments in decent work for women, including childcare and prevention of gender-based violence.
- R.63 Promote sharing of good practices amongst governments, private sector and other stakeholders, to strengthen the role of the private sector in promoting women's economic empowerment. In this regard, highlight the pivotal role and influence of advertisement and media by the private sector in promoting women's economic empowerment, positive female and male role models, transforming gender norms, non-traditional work roles for women and messages on gender equality and women's empowerment. Furthermore, encourage more collaboration between government, trade unions, NGOs, civil society and private sector to promote the private sector's promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, in line with agreed regional and international legal and policy frameworks.
- R.64 Ensure that women working in special economic zones or export processing zones are not subject to restrictions in regard to their rights and freedoms, and that these zones do not displace communities or affect the livelihood of women farmers and agricultural workers, and that special conditions for companies operating in those zones such as tax exemptions do not infringe on women's economic rights.

