

**Multi-Stakeholder Forum on “Women’s empowerment in the Changing World of Work”**

**30 January 2017**

**Opening Remarks**

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

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Leaders from Civil Society,  
Colleagues and Friends,

I welcome you to UN-Women’s Multi-Stakeholder Forum devoted to the priority theme of the upcoming sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) on “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.” We are heartened to once again see such a high level of interest and participation.

At the outset, allow me to thank the many distinguished Permanent Representatives for accepting our invitation to contribute as moderators and panelists, and the experts in attendance who we hope will participate in the discussion from the floor.

I also thank civil society leaders and colleagues from the UN system who have joined us today. Together, we can bring about real progress for all women and girls.

During the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Member States adopted action-oriented Agreed Conclusions on “Women’s empowerment and its link to sustainable development” that reaffirmed commitment to accelerating implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and established a definitive roadmap for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Commission also recognized that women’s equal economic rights, economic empowerment and independence are essential to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Further, women’s equal opportunities for full and productive employment and decent work, and equal pay for equal work or

work of equal value are key challenges to the full integration of women into the formal economy.

The Commission has affirmed women's economic rights and independence and called for action to promote women's right to work and also their rights at work. Women's economic empowerment requires enhanced interventions to tackle persistent gender inequalities and gaps in the world of work, including adoption and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes that protect women against discrimination and abuse in the workplace.

The Commission's decision to consider the priority theme of "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work" is timely. **Women's economic empowerment is a theme that the Commission has not considered before.** It is a forward looking agenda that presents an opportunity for the Commission to provide concrete, practical and action-oriented recommendations that cover significant new ground, on overcoming structural barriers to gender equality, gender-based discrimination and violence against women in the changing world work, and for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goals 1, 5 and 8. Thus, the outcomes can make a significant contribution to the global normative framework.

As the premier institution for elaborating on the what and how of implementation of gender equality commitments, the Commission on the Status of Women has the historic opportunity to significantly advance women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work and thus accelerate implementation from a gender equality perspective through consideration of its priority theme.

**All the actions we take from here onwards will be a significant contribution towards the next milestone in 2020 when the UN will commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.** We would need to assure ourselves and the 3.5 billion women and girls that the world is indeed on the right track and that every law, every policy, every measure, every action taken, every social norm and cultural wave and every investment made by all governments and stakeholders is rapidly bringing us closer to our achievement of SDG 5 - Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls everywhere.

As you engage in the formulation and strengthening of global policy guidance on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, UN-Women stands ready to provide substantive and technical support.

### **Objectives of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum**

Today's Multi-Stakeholder Forum is aimed at providing an opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to start focusing on the key issues that will come up at the sixty-first session, to strengthen partnerships and help create an environment that will be conducive to a substantively strong session with solid consensus. I hope that our dialogue today will lay a fertile ground for a successful session in March.

In line with past practice, various regions are also converging to prepare for CSW61. The Africa consultation hosted by ECA, African Union Commission and UN-Women just concluded last week in Addis Ababa. For Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC and UN-Women are hosting a preparatory meeting in Panama on 6-8 February. On 7 February, the Government of Bahrain is hosting the regional preparatory meeting for Arab States co-organized by UN-Women and the League of Arab States. Asia-Pacific will hold an event later in February, co-organized by ESCAP, UN-Women and the UN System's Regional Coordination Mechanism.

### **Programme**

After this brief opening session, we will proceed with discussion in four panels as detailed in the programme circulated. The topics of the panels are also addressed in the Secretary-General's report on the priority theme, which is available on the CSW61 website.

- The first panel will look at normative and legal frameworks as well as measures to address structural barriers to women's economic empowerment;
- The second panel will address women's leadership and participation, and their equal representation in decision-making positions at work and in leadership positions in trade unions, worker and employer organizations and corporate boards;
- In the third panel, we will look at what economic and social policies need to be in place and implemented to promote women's economic empowerment;

- The fourth and final panel will look at how to ensure that the changing world of work characterized by the growing informality of work, technological change and mobility of labor, expands opportunities for women.

After the panel discussions have concluded, I will capture the main conclusions from our discussions during the wrap-up session at 5:30 PM.

I encourage all panelists and discussants from the floor to highlight key areas for implementation and commit to further action. Your leadership and commitment is critical to ensuring a successful outcome of CSW61 that will be instrumental in the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs, and have a direct impact on the lives of women and girls.

Thank you once again for your being here today and, most importantly, for your commitment. I look forward to rich discussions.