



Speaking Points LJG

61st Commission on the Status of Women

Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work

Multi-Stakeholder Forum

New York, 30 January 2017

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

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION (see concept and discussion note) :

- ❖ What legislative and policy actions are necessary and effective in addressing structural barriers to women's economic empowerment and eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence in the world of work?
- ❖ What measures are governments taking to reduce and eliminate gender inequalities and gaps in the world of work, and what roles do workers' and employers' organizations have to help in effectively implementing relevant laws and policies?
- ❖ How are countries integrating these efforts into their national strategies and policies for implementing the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goals 1, 5, 8 and 10? How are national mechanisms for gender equality supporting these efforts?

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SPEAKING POINTS :

What legislative and policy actions are necessary and effective in addressing structural barriers to women's economic empowerment and eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence in the world of work?

- Switzerland considers that one of the critical steps to realize women's economic empowerment is to embed the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in the legal framework, in compliance with international labour standards.
- Our Federal Constitution explicitly enshrines the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and prohibits wage discrimination. On this basis, we enacted the Federal Act on Gender Equality in 1996, which focuses on equality in employment relationships and proscribes discrimination against women and men on the basis of sex. It covers both the public and private sector and specifically addresses wage discrimination. It further prohibits sexual harassment. As a key accountability mechanism, it also enables workers organizations to lodge, in their own names, complaints before the courts and to seek a finding of gender-based discrimination (art. 7).
- The elimination of the gender wage gap is a policy priority for my Government. Without the right policy actions, progress on narrowing the gender pay will remain stagnant. The Swiss Government follows a multi-pronged approach that involves both mandatory and voluntary measures.

What measures are governments taking to reduce and eliminate gender inequalities and gaps in the world of work, and what roles do workers' and employers' organizations have to help in effectively implementing relevant laws and policies?

- Our policy actions are focused on (1) the development of instruments enabling all companies to check their pay practice; (2) the obligation of employers to regularly analyze their pay practice; (3) the implementation of wage equality in the public procurement market; and among these measures allow me to highlight the following:

- First, the Swiss Government offers instruments to private as well as public employers in order to facilitate them to check – and if necessary – adapt their pay practices. I would like to mention Logib, which is an equal pay self-analysis tool for private and public employers, enabling companies with more than 50 employees to easily check whether they practice equal pay for men and women. It can be downloaded anonymously and free of charges on the internet (www.logib.ch).¹
- Second, while providing voluntary measures is essential, Switzerland considers that additional mandatory measures are also needed. Our Government has therefore recently proposed to legally compel private sector companies to analyze their pay practice on a regular basis. The legislative reform process in this regard is still underway.
- Third, the Federal Act on Public Procurement enshrines the principle of pay equality between men and women: the Swiss Government awards mandates only to companies which respect wage equality. Controls are being undertaken in order to ensure compliance and breaches may lead to sanctions.
- Besides tackling the gender pay gap, we have also targeted our efforts towards increasing women's labor market participation with highly skilled women. To improve work-life balance, we aim to address the shortage of day care facilities by establishing new financial incentives for cantons, communes and employers. In addition, higher fiscal deductions will be allowed in the future for childcare expenses.
- Labour markets are marked by new forms of work at times significant in their precariousness, insecurity and low wages. It is therefore all the more important to conduct a constructive and continued social dialogue between the workers' and employers' organizations, for example to agree on fair wages, including for low-wage earners, two third of which are women in Switzerland.

¹ Logib has been used by Germany (also on the Panel) and Luxembourg which have developed their own version of the tool.

How are countries integrating these efforts into their national strategies and policies for implementing the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goals 1, 5, 8 and 10? How are national mechanisms for gender equality supporting these efforts?

- The 2030 Agenda now provides a robust roadmap to gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth. Investing in women's economic empowerment is intrinsic to achieving our commitments regarding Goals 1, 5, 8 and 10.
- In this regard, our efforts have resulted in the adoption of a National Strategy 2016-2019 on Sustainable Development, which specifically includes measures aimed at strengthening women's economic empowerment.
- In our foreign policy and development cooperation efforts in particular, we place a particular focus on the promotion of women's transition to employment and on the integration of gender and women's economic empowerment in private sector development. Regarding the agricultural sector, we promote women's access to land and water, technology and financial services in order for women to increase their productivity and income and secure food security.
- Finally, allow me to touch upon the role of the private sector. Indeed, the business community must do their share in strengthening women's economic rights and opportunities. As a host country to many companies and corporations of all sizes, Switzerland has taken on a particular role to promote the private sector's responsibility to respect human rights and address adverse impacts on human rights. That includes women's rights and the Women's Empowerment Principles are a useful entry point to connect with businesses.
- I wish you all an inspiring forum. I thank you for your attention.