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Multi-Stakeholder Forum: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Change World of Work
30 January 2017
10am - 1pm and 3- 6pm
Conference Room 3

3:00 - 4:15 PM Panel Discussions III: Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment.

Good afternoon Madame Chair and distinguished delegates.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be here and contribute to this discussion.

Huairou Commission: Women, Homes and Community is a global coalition of grassroots women's organizations, NGOs and networks working through partnerships to empower grassroots women's leadership in the development of resilient communities through local to global initiatives.

Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment requires effective interventions that promote structural transformation and require systems and collaboration, which is paramount not only at a global level, but across all scales. On the question of **concrete actions governments are taking to incentivize job creation and the promotion of women's full, equal and productive employment and decent work**, I would like to focus on the importance of linking government's efforts to successfully improve women's land tenure security and land rights, which is directly related to decent work and women's livelihoods. The framing of tenure security and land rights, in particular for women, has increasingly bridged in international development agendas. For that matter it is important to highlight a few global frameworks that explicitly make recommendations. These include: the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women's recent General Recommendation 34 on the Rights of Rural Women, as well as to link the Sustainable Development Goals that feature land rights as critical to development (namely, end poverty (Goal 1), food security (Goal 2), and gender equality and empower women and girls (Goal 5), tying into CSW session's review theme of "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls." Member States of the Commission on the Status of Women unanimously agreed in its last session that women must have equal rights to a range of land rights, from access, to ownership, to control over land. The 2016 Agreed Conclusions contain two explicit references to women's rights that urge **states to anchor a normative framework for women's land rights which would require states to not only enact strong, unequivocal laws, but also to ensure equal rights are realized.** Lastly, I would like to highlight that the recently agreed **New Urban Agenda** also makes multiple commitments on the promotion of "increased security of tenure for all," it recognizes the "plurality of tenure types," and explicitly identifies women's security of land tenure as the cornerstone of their empowerment in #35.

It is well documented that secure land rights for women are essential building blocks for women's economic empowerment, particularly for women in rural areas who too often lack rights to the land they toil and rely on for livelihood. Women are half of the over one billion rural poor who seek out an existence on less than \$2 a day, and their prospects of breaking the yoke of poverty are bleaker than those of their male counterparts due to lingering discriminatory laws and gender-biased social norms that curtail their opportunities for economic, social, and political empowerment.

Globally, more than 400 million women farm. In sub-Saharan Africa and Asia the majority of employed women work in agriculture - 60 and 70 percent, respectively. With no guarantee to their land, women grapple with fewer means and incentives to invest in the land, access seeds, fertilizer, and equipment, and to increase its productivity and yields. Increasingly around the globe, women dominate agriculture and forest-based labor in rural communities, a phenomenon often termed the “feminization of agriculture.”

As with other sectors that have been “feminized,” this has not necessarily resulted in a boom for women. While male urban migration has positively affected women’s opportunities to partake in land and natural resource governance, **women’s participation and leadership in rural councils responsible for major land-related decisions, including allocations and investments, remains the exception.** Outmoded laws and biased gender norms continue to claw at women’s ability to genuinely control land and invest in land to the same extent as men. Women continue to shoulder the bulk of unremunerated household duties from cooking, cleaning, to fetching water, collecting firewood and care-taking. Yet when women have strong land rights they are able to earn more and carve out a resiliency cushion.

Despite the existing barriers, there are a number of relevant international and national policy tools and targets, such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGTs) and the Africa Union’s (AU) commitment of 30% target of new documented land rights allocated to African women by 2025 (AU specialized technical committee on agriculture, rural development, water and environment, 2016). However, there is plenty of room for more collaboration to be established in order to make frameworks, such as the VGGTs. Additionally, the international and national standards do not have an in-depth framework that analyses specific requirements or indicators on women’s land rights to assess whether they are on the right track. **Therefore, governments need to be influenced to establish criteria, including gender as a strategy at the international and national level, in order to prioritize women’s land rights.**

We use M&E tools such as the Gender Evaluation Criteria (GEC), a flexible adaptable framework tool that checks the gender compliance of land governance at grassroots, local and national levels, which can also aid in the implementation of policies, such as the VGGTs, as well as the NUA or other national frameworks at the country level. Here I can share a successful practice through the use of this gender framework in Brazil. A multi-stakeholder process was formed to implement the Master Plan Land Titling Program in Ponte do Maduro Recife. With municipalities required to prepare plans with the participation of local residents’ participation in developing the Master Plan, Espaço Feminista, a non-governmental organization with support from the Huairou Commission, led a ten-year, five-phase process of social struggle to ensure women’s rights were integrated into the regularization process.

To achieve this, Espaço Feminista volunteered to coordinate a pilot project in Ponte do Maduro, a 50-hectare settlement with 10,000 low- income families, and used Gender Evaluation Criteria (GEC) as a tool not only to monitor, evaluate and create accountability around the regularization process, but also to empower local women to become leaders in their own process. This ensured that communities were not just beneficiaries, but also the main actors in its implementation. In addition, the bottom-up approach was successful in overcoming the challenges of translating law into action, with this transformative process ensuring that women were guaranteed equal treatment throughout the process. Of 5,700 titles, 90 percent are now issued to women, 37% of whom head their households. Through an active and engaging planning and implementation, the intervention integrated local women who were empowered as leaders and who continue to be engaged in other

matters of the community. When women have secure rights to land, women's status improves, leading to social and economic empowerment. Research demonstrates links between strengthening women's rights to land and productive assets and women's increased participation in household decision-making.

In the urban areas for instance, economic development and land-use planning should formally engage with the urban agricultural production sector, in particular women's cooperatives, in order to take into account and plan interventions to scale up and diversify their urban agricultural production to improve and stabilize the supply of affordable food and women's earnings. The explosion of women producers (rural to urban) increases fresh food, creates jobs, recycles municipal waste (compost), creates green belts and strengthens the city's resilience to climate change (United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture, FAO)—a win/win for women and cities.

Thank you!