

**Panel Presentation**  
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**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of**  
**Thailand**  
**at the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for CSW61 on**  
**Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing**  
**World of Work**  
**Panel 3: Implementing Economic and Social Policies**  
**for Women's Economic Empowerment**  
**15.00 – 16.15 hrs., 30 January 2017**  
**Conference Room 3**

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### ***I. Introduction***

For the Royal Thai Government, **women's economic empowerment is an indispensable component of sustainable development.** It is therefore essential to integrate into our national policies a gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We see the need to accelerate actions on our short term and long-standing commitments in order to realize the mutually reinforcing goals of women's empowerment and sustainable development.

Women account for 64 per cent of the workforce in Thailand. Although they generally enjoy the same level of pay as their male counterpart, there are still **significant challenges** to address. As in many countries across the globe, in the Kingdom of Thailand, there continue to be significant inequalities between women and men in the world of work, including in the level of **formal participation** in the labour market. It is therefore important

to periodically take stock of the current economic and social policies, in order to ensure that they are genuinely gender-sensitive.

It is also important to bring together the public and private sectors to start developing strategies to fast-track women's empowerment and economic development at the same time. We should also think about **multiplying the positive impacts of empowering women**, focussing both on the benefits of women's economic empowerment and the intrinsic value of increasing women's power in terms of enhancing respect for their rights and improving their everyday lives.

## *II. Concrete Examples of Progressive Laws, Policies, Plans of Action in Thailand to enhance women's economic empowerment.*

Thailand is committed to achieving Goal 5 of the SDGs, as well as other goals related to promoting women's empowerment. The Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development and the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board are currently working on a national roadmap to achieve those Goals, including through incorporating them into Thailand's 12<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021).

Currently, I am proud to say that in Thailand, gender has never been an impediment to accessing business opportunities. Women entrepreneurs, SME owners – from CEOs of large to small enterprises – constitute 47 per cent

of Thailand's business population. As owners, executives and employees in these enterprises, they contribute approximately 45 per cent of National Income.

The Government has also been working to facilitate **access to finance for women entrepreneurs**. This is especially true for SMEs, micro-enterprises and start-up technology with the support of major financial institutions, both in the public and private sectors, such as the Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperative and the SME Bank. In 2007, the **Women's SME Association of Thailand** was established to promote market access and strengthen networks for women entrepreneurs.

On the rural front, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit led the way more than four decades ago by establishing the **Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupation and Related Techniques**, which has been continuously working to equip women in rural areas with traditional, sometimes long lost, handicraft skills and knowledge to market them. This has provided them with supplementary income and, to a larger extent, a sense of economic independence and empowerment.

Following in Her Majesty's footsteps, the authorities and civil society have joined hands to focus on empowering women through skills training, job creation and micro financing for women-led businesses. In 2012, the **Thai Women's Empowerment Fund** was established to enhance women's opportunity in the economy. The Fund supports women-led projects and implementing activities to develop leadership skills for women. The Fund provides an annual sum of approximately 2,800,000 USD, which is distributed and managed at the national and local level.

With that being said, **structural barriers** for women's economic empowerment still exist. Among them, **unpaid care and domestic work** ranks high on the agenda of the Royal Thai Government. Several social protection policies, including accessible and affordable quality social and care services for children, older persons and persons with disabilities have been put in place for immediate impact.

Equally important, the Government and other stakeholders are also promoting **equal sharing of responsibilities** between women and men, including through awareness-raising activities for the general public in anticipation of a longer-term impact. This is obviously not going to be an easy task, but we have to start somewhere.

Structural barriers, in particular unpaid care and domestic work, is also a global issue and governments and other stakeholders must work together to remove them and reduce the disproportionate burden traditionally assigned to women. **This should be one of the key issues to be more thoroughly discussed at the upcoming CSW.** Together, we must find the ways and means and best practices to address this undue burden traditionally put on women.

### ***III. Conclusion***

Keeping gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of our development efforts will be **the key** to the success of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Thailand firmly believes that there can be no sustainable development if tangible and intangible barriers which hold back half the population are not properly addressed. We will continue to work with all partners to holistically address the issue.

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