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Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations

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ACTION UN Women

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In the name of God, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful



4 October 2021

Excellency,

With reference to your letter No. UNW/2021/011 dated 19 August 2021 pertaining to the provision of information on the subject of “Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work”, I have the honor to attach herewith the report prepared by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the above-mentioned subject.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Majid Takht Ravanchi
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

H.E Mr. Antonio Guterres
Secretary- General
United Nations, New York



Introduction:

Iranian society is a family-oriented society. According to the rules delineated by Sharia and the laws adopted in the country, the man is responsible for the provision of support for the family. Therefore, in the analysis of economic issues and employment of Iranian women, it should be noted that Iranian women with higher education are engaged, away from coercion and on a voluntary basis, in domestic or informal jobs of personal interest. However, according to all existing laws, the right to employment with equal pay and free from any discrimination in a safe environment for women is recognized. It should be noted that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has undertaken all of the necessary supports in order to empower (from training for the purpose of production to connection to the market) women, especially those in vulnerable situations and female-headed households.

1. Boosting Legal and Normative Frameworks

A. The Constitution of The Islamic Republic of Iran

- Article 3, Paragraph 9 of this law asserts the elimination of undue discrimination and the creation of fair facilities for all citizens; including women;
- Articles 19 and 20 emphasize equality before the law;
- Article 21, paragraph 1 obliges the Government to provide the necessary grounds for promotion of women's personality and the realization of their material and spiritual rights;
- Paragraphs 2 and 4 of Article 21 of the Constitution provide "special" protection for mothers, especially during pregnancy and childcare as well as during widowhood, old age and homelessness;
- Article 29 of the law emphasizes the benefit of all citizens (both men and women) from social security insurance for unemployment, retirement, old age and disability; and
- Paragraph 2 of Article 43 of this law stipulates the provision of working conditions and facilities for all (both men and women) in order to achieve full employment and to provide work equipment to all those who are able to work but do not have the right means.



B. The Act of the Sixth Economic, Social & Cultural Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1396-1400 (2018-2022)

This Act obliges all executive bodies of the Government to achieve the goals set forth in the above-mentioned articles of the Constitution, the goals of the vision document of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the horizon of 1404 (2026) which emphasizes the elimination of discrimination and the general policies of the Sixth Plan 1395 (2016) on "boosting the institution of the family and the standing of women in the same and the fulfillment of women's religious and legal rights in all areas and paying special attention to their constructive role" and also in order for society to benefit from women's human capital in the process of sustainable and balanced development through organizing and strengthening the organizational position of women and family affairs in the system, to adopt the approach of gender justice based on Islamic principles in their policies, programs and plans as well as evaluate the effects and decisions based on the indicators served by the National Headquarters for Women and Family of the Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution. Also from the executive perspective, and according to Note 1 of this article, the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs is obliged to continuously monitor the promotion of gender justice in the organs by evaluating the policies, programs and plans of the executive bodies and submit its annual report to the Islamic Consultative Assembly and the Council of Ministers, which has already been implemented.

C. General policies of the Sixth Development Plan Approved in 1394 (2015)

The executive plan of the sixth development law of the country which is currently being implemented.

D. The Vision Document of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Horizon of 1404 (2026)

This document, which contains the characteristics that the Iranian Government should achieve by 1404 (2026), outlines the realization of equal opportunities and the eradication of discrimination.

E. General Population Policies Announced in 1393 (2014)

The document addresses the prohibition of discrimination against pregnant women and mothers in the workplace with a broad advocacy approach.

F. General Population Policies Announced in 1395 (2016)

This document repeatedly emphasizes the legal, economic and cultural protections of female-headed households.

G. General Policies of the Administrative System Announced by the Supreme Leader on 31/01/2010



- Section 2 of these policies refers to the centrality of justice in attracting, continuing service and promoting human resources;
- Section 3 also emphasizes the avoidance of preferential and unprofessional attitudes in the selection of human resources; and
- Section 6 of these policies stipulates the observance of justice in the payment system.

H. Announcing the Charter of Citizenship Rights by then President in 2016

Prohibition of Undue Discrimination (Article 8), the right to enjoy personal security (Article 13), the right of women and children to be free from behavioral and verbal violence in all areas (Article 54), the right to enjoy an environment free from personal and social harm (Article 91).

I. Law on Safeguarding the Women's Rights and Responsibilities in Domestic and International Areas, adopted in 2007

This Charter lists some of the rights of women that other laws have not foreseen, and the most important axes of women's rights in all areas, especially in the employment environment.

J. Women's Employment Policies in the Islamic Republic of Iran, approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution in 1992

While paying attention to equal pay, this document focuses on providing job security for women and their enjoyment of social security in cases of unemployment, illness, old age or disability, and specifying workplace security, especially support packages for working mothers, including paid leave, reduced work hours and the benefits of retirement with fewer years of service.

K. Labor Law of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Approved in 1990

Article 38 of the law stipulates the need to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in wages and recognizes that all persons are entitled to equal pay for equal work.

L. Civil Service Management Law, Approved in 2007

- Article 89 of this law provides for the equal rights of employees of executive bodies in the appointment of organizational jobs should they meet the necessary conditions; and
- According to paragraph 4 of Article 68 of this law, there shall be no discrimination based on gender in the payment of salaries and wages of employees.

M. Insurance Laws

In all existing laws of the Country, there is no gender discrimination between men and women in this regard. Even insurance laws provide special protection for



pregnant women during pregnancy and then breastfeeding, as well as mothers with young children.

N. Formulation of Legal Bills

The 57-article bill "Preservation of Dignity and Protection of Women against Violence" has been drafted in 5 chapters and has been sent to the Social Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly for further review in May of this year. This comprehensive bill has become official law by criminalizing all forms of violence against women in all family and social spheres after its approval in the open chamber of the Parliament, which can be a big step in protecting women against social harms in normal and critical situations.

O. Presidential Order to Abolish Employment Quotas Based on Unfair Discrimination

2. Stronger Education & Skills Development

According to the census of 1995 (2016) for the age group of 10 to 49 years, the literacy rate has reached 94.7%. At present, the literacy rate in the age group of 10 to 49 years has reached 96.6%. Also, with the aim of achieving gender justice in the last fourteen years, over 80% of activities in the field of literacy have been for women and girls. It is worth noting that the gap between men and women in education has decreased to 2.8%.

Comparative Rates of Higher Education for Girls & Boys

	2017	2015	2013	2010	2005	2000	1994
M	2202231	2602346	2299858	2078718	1156907	825817	331102
F	1871596	2200375	2136022	2037875	1231662	743951	145353

According to this, until the 98th academic year (2020), the female student population was 47.6% and the male student population was 52.4%. Also, 33% of the country's faculty members are women.

In addition, in the recent academic year, supporting the literacy of rural and nomadic women and girls in 26 provinces through the empowerment of about 3,900 female and literacy educators as well as about 30,000 illiterate rural and



nomadic women and girls who have dropped out of school is on the agenda of Women and Family Affairs Deputyship.

3. Implementing Economic & Social Policies to Empower Women Economically

- A. Carrying out a national empowerment plan for women seeking business opportunities with an entrepreneurial approach in cooperation with non-governmental organizations in business education for 1300 people in 13 provinces;
- B. Pursuing the allocation of National Development Fund resources to rural and nomadic women in the executive regulations of the Law on Supporting Development and Creating Sustainable Employment in Rural and Nomadic Areas and in terms of the membership of the Director General of Women and Family Affairs in the above committee;
- C. Supporting 13 micro-credit networks of rural and nomadic women in 8 provinces of the country with the aim of empowering rural and nomadic women and their access to resources;
- D. Implementation of interest-free loan agreements in the amount of 1000 billion Rials to 33,000 female-headed households, self-employed girls and never married women (over 40 years) throughout the country via Gharz-ul-Hasna Mehr Bank of Iran;
- E. Action to implement the economic empowerment plan for women heads of households for 21 provinces in cooperation with the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, emphasizing the new model of home business development for 6,000 people;
- F. Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Economic Empowerment of Women in 10 Provinces in Cooperation with the Social Council of the Country and Non-Governmental Organizations and the Technical and Vocational Education Organization;
- G. Allocation of 10 million Rials in cash subsidies to 17 million households (more than 50 million people) with the aim of reducing economic losses, recession and financial pressure on families. Thanks to the follow-up campaign of the Deputy Minister of Women and Family Affairs, women heads of households have been given priority in receiving this livelihood assistance. In addition, with the approval of the Board of Ministers, the COVID-19 loan for women heads of households was doubled;



- H. The approval of a \$ 10 billion budget in the form of employer loans to boost the crisis-hit economy affected by COVID-19 has been another measure of government support for families in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Also, providing facilities of 10 to 20 million rials for 4 million families and a grant of 2 to 6 million rials for 3 million people on 4 occasions have been among other livelihood measures. In all the mentioned cases, special attention has been paid to women;
- I. Allocation of unemployment insurance for men and women who have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the ceiling of services covered by public health insurance in the Country and requiring supplementary insurance companies to pay a share of social services, especially medical treatment for patients with coronary heart disease, have been the major activities of the Government to improve health services during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- J. In addition, the Government has obliged all public health service centers to offer free of charge COVID-19 diagnostic tests, and in case of approval and the need for hospitalization, all medical services of this group are completely free and covered by the Country's health insurance.

4. Addressing the increasing informality of work and the dynamism of women employees

About 20 million of the country's population are housewives or those with informal employment, half of whom are young people between the ages of 20 and 39, who are eligible for support, such as self-employment insurance, facilities and local markets to offer their products should they choose to enter the home-based business cycle. In 1399 (2021), a total of about 6 trillion rials of bank facilities have been paid to home-based businesses.

- A. Providing insurance for women heads of households, implementing social security insurance for women carpet weavers, villagers, nomads and housewives with the participation of the Government and the private sector, as well as encouraging the creation of self-employment insurance;
- B. Concluding a memorandum of understanding with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization on various issues of employment and empowerment of women in the mission areas of the two sides;



- C. Strengthening women's self-employment by providing employment-generating facilities as well as supporting technical and vocational training;
- D. Launching a Warp and Weft campaign to encourage girls and women to buy woven bracelets to support their economic activity and as a symbol of national identity;
- E. Supporting the holding of regional exhibitions offering the products of women's cooperatives by holding 10 exhibitions for a week in 10 provinces of the Country (one exhibition in each province);
- F. Organizing micro and home businesses by supporting the inception and development of women's cooperatives and home business cooperatives with a value chain approach by supporting the formation or development of at least 292 women's cooperatives and home business cooperatives leading to the creation of 1710 jobs over two years;
- G. Holding a workshop to master the patterns, models and processes of clustering and networking in business and women's micro and home businesses (with emphasis on creating cooperative holdings of women entrepreneurs) through a three-day workshop (24 hours of training) for 80 managers of women's cooperatives (a total of 1920 people / training hours);
- H. Providing initial capital through the provision of facilities to women heads of households by Mehr Iran, Refahe Kargaran (Workers' Welfare) and Tovse'eh Ta'avon (Cooperative Development) Banks.
 - Concluding a memorandum of understanding with the Workers' Welfare Bank to provide per capita facilities of 30 million Rials to 3,300 trained female-headed households;
 - Concluding a Memorandum of Understanding with the Cooperative Development Bank to provide per capita facilities of 30 million Rials to 1700 female-headed households in order to create sustainable employment for trained and skilled women who need initial capital and allocation of credit in the amount of 250 billion rials to provide Murabaha financial facilities at a rate of 15% for women's cooperatives; and
 - Paying interest-free financial facilities to 33,300 women heads of households by Mehr Bank of Iran.
- I. Supporting job creation and continuity of activities of 20 women's cooperatives with priority in deprived areas as well as low-income classes and preparing the ground for creating 40 new job opportunities and sustainability of 60 existing



- jobs in 10 provinces of the Country in cooperation with the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare;
- J. Empowering and improving the skills of managers, members and employees of women's cooperatives through holding workshops and training courses for 1550 managers, members and employees of women's cooperatives in 31 provinces with the cooperation of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare;
 - K. Empowerment of rural and nomadic women based on the value chain of medicinal plants, selection of 200 agricultural jihad centers according to the polarization of medicinal plants in agricultural fields and natural resources, holding 3 specialized training workshops on topics such as selecting priority medicinal plants adapted to the climate and conditions of the region, cultivation and revitalization of medicinal plants in farms and pastures for rural and nomadic women (a total of 5,000 people, 54 hours of training, 270,000 people/hours of training); introducing eligible audiences interested in creating or developing employment in the field of medicinal plants to receive inexpensive facilities in cooperation with the Ministry of Jihad and Agriculture;
 - L. Ecotourism training and promotion with emphasis on empowerment of local communities in the Country upon the coordination of the Ministries of Jihad Agriculture and Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts with emphasis on the capacities and comparative advantages of villages and holding 28-hour workshops for 4800 people (134400 people/training hours) from 160 selected villages from rural women; implementation of promotional programs to attract tourists in selected villages and introduce them to tourism centers; introducing eligible audiences interested in creating or developing employment in the field of ecotourism to receive affordable facilities;
 - M. Implementation of interest-free loan agreements for 33,000 female-headed households and single women over 40; and
 - N. Offering trainings and support for the creation of home (kitchen) gardens in 31 provinces.

5. Managing Technological and Digital Change for Women's Economic Empowerment

The gender gap in access to technology between women and men has shrunk by 4% in recent years. Of the total technology users in terms of access, 52% are men and 48% are women, while the latter makes up 23% of mobile software developers. The major driver of digital transformation, i.e. creativity, belongs to



women, and therefore this group boasts a 50% role in the growth of digital transformation. In addition, 26 million people, 45% of the total mobile phone users, 14.5 million people, including 48% of the total computer users, and 18.7 million people, including 48% of the total Internet users, are women.

In this way, the Deputy for Women and Family Affairs has been able to:

- A. Enhance the skills of available women entrepreneurs and encourage them to enter virtual markets through women's education; sign a joint memorandum with the Vice President for Science and Technology and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology; sign a memorandum of understanding with the National Post Company of the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to enter the field of implementation and operationalization; conclude contracts with 5 social facilitation institutions and 5 start-up companies to cover the whole Country with the aim of community-based activities to strengthen teamwork and promote cross-sectoral cooperation in funds, cooperatives and partner groups of women heads of households; train on how to brand products made by women entrepreneurs and how to complete the chains in the stages of supplying raw materials, production and supply; register products and connecting entrepreneurial groups to cyberspace by providing advertising content and photography;
- B. Strengthen women's business and development networks through the development of information technology; and
- C. Create virtual sales markets in collaboration with the Vice President for Science and Technology and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to empower women to enter the virtual sales markets with 63 startups and 10 community-based facilitation groups.

6. Strengthening the Collective Voice of Women, Leadership and Decision-making

- A. According to the decision of the Supreme Administrative Council dated 18 July 2017, it was decided to raise the ratio of female managers in managerial positions to 30% by the end of the Sixth Development Plan (1400) (2022);
- B. In the last four years, from 1396 (2018) to 1400 (2021), the selection of female managers has grown by 98.4%; and
- C. The number of female managers at all levels has gone up from 12.7% in 1396 to 25.2% in 1400 (2021).



7. Strengthening the Role of Private Sector in Women's Empowerment

- A. Empowerment of women heads of households throughout the Country with the cooperation of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare and relevant agencies and its approval and notification, which is responsible for identifying women heads of households from vocational training to the sale of their products. The implementation of this national plan to date has led to the creation of 2645 brands of various goods;
- B. Supporting 80,000 women heads of households of young women graduates for entrepreneurship to obtain a loan for employment through the cooperation of Omid Entrepreneurship Fund, Cooperative Development Bank, Workers' Welfare Bank, Gharz al-Hassaneh Mehr Bank of Iran and Entrepreneur Insurance;
- C. Holding a student event on girls' work, skills, and innovation (Kamand scheme) in 15 provinces of the Country;
- D. Educating more than 1400 students interested in business, receiving 760 business ideas and plans from the covered students, holding a specialized dialogue panel with entrepreneurs and academic experts, visiting commercial and industrial centers and providing consulting services with the cooperation of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, which one of the most important actions of this office;
- E. Supporting the establishment of more than 410 micro-credit funds for rural and nomadic women and women's cooperatives;
- F. Establishing a campaign for women in the boycott generation by identifying, introducing and supporting about 500 women entrepreneurs, especially in small towns and villages;
- G. Collaboration with the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare and the Agricultural Jihad Organization in the Corona Crisis to direct the production of female-headed households to health supplies such as masks, gowns and disinfectants;
- H. Designing and implementing a single welfare service window for women heads of households in cooperation with the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Community Welfare;
- I. Coordinating with Gharz al-Hassaneh Mehr Bank of Iran, Workers' Welfare Bank, Cooperative Development Bank, Omid Entrepreneurship Fund, Bank Mellat and Bank Melli to support about 53,000 university graduate girls,



- women entrepreneurs, female-headed households and girls who have never married and rural women with the aim of developing home-based businesses, starting small, small and value-added businesses, opening job slots and meeting their essential needs by providing facilities to women in the target community;
- J. Holding ten national competitions to select the top women entrepreneurs across the Country through polls and public voting;
 - K. Implementation of a virtual course for 1100 organizations with the aim of empowerment;
 - L. Supporting 415 joint projects of non-governmental organizations active in the field of women and family with the focus on job creation, prevention of social harms, strengthening the foundation of the family, deepening religious values and beliefs;
 - M. Economic empowerment of women heads of households and those with ill-fitting providers that seek jobs in 9 provinces of the Country in cooperation with NGOs in the field of women and families throughout the Country;
 - N. Implementation of the national empowerment plan for women seeking business opportunities with an entrepreneurial approach in 31 provinces of the Country and setting up a database of women with ideas in all provinces;
 - O. Implementation of the women's empowerment plan in virtual sales markets with the cooperation of entities;
 - P. Holding a festival to introduce and celebrate women business owners and entrepreneurs in deprived and less privileged areas of the Country;
 - Q. Launching and establishing the "Cooperative and Entrepreneurship Development Foundation"; and
 - R. Implementation of the National Empowerment Plan for Women Seeking Business Opportunities with an Entrepreneurship Approach in 31 Provinces of the Country in Cooperation with the Women and Youth Entrepreneurship Development Foundation, which led to the preparation of a database with 700 records of women with ideas in all provinces.