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Sixtieth Session**

Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development

INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

Participation and multi-stakeholder partnerships for gender-responsive implementation of 2030 Agenda

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

‘Leveraging the role of the MDBs for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda’

Given their role of leveraging finance for development, Multi-Lateral Development Banks (MDBs) are well-placed to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the specific goal for the promotion of gender equality. For decades now, the MDBs have been providing financial and technical assistance to their clients, both public and private. Increasingly donors and others want to ensure that desired outcomes are achieved and one way to do this is to work with partners with complementary skills and/or networks. The achievement of Goal 5 will be much more likely through the establishment of such strategic partnerships.

I The role MDBs can play in building strategic partnerships for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The MDBs have increasingly partnered and will continue to partner with numerous institutions (international organisations, governments, nongovernmental organisations, the private sector and other bilateral development agencies) in order to address gender gaps in different sectors at the global, regional and national levels. There is a growing awareness that while MDBs may have certain assets and attributes (such as financial and human resources, access to high level policy dialogue and capacity to respond relatively fast), they may not have equally valuable attributes and assets such as local understanding, perspectives and knowledge, that civil society organisations may have. Through the establishment of strategic partnerships, the MDBs are uniquely positioned to:

- ***Deliver on their objectives and achieve gender equality outcomes.*** Partnerships enable MDBs to tap into the capacity, knowledge and networks of partner institutions -whether regional, local or sectoral- identify what works and what doesn't, disseminate sectoral good practices and enhance project delivery. The EBRD has developed and rolled out a number of Women in Business (WiB) programmes in its Countries of Operations (Turkey, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Albania to name a few) to help close gender gaps in access to finance. This objective can be achieved by establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships to provide specialised EBRD financing to women-led SMEs with a risk sharing mechanism and advice to both Partner Financial Institutions (PFIs) on how they manage data, behave towards potential female clients and women-led SMEs. The WiB programmes are designed to help narrow medium to large gender gaps in terms of “access to finance” with products (i.e a comprehensive package) that are tailor-made to the specific needs of women-led businesses in each country. Women SMEs in the EBRD's countries of operations are also supported through the WiBs in a strategic and comprehensive manner, working on the basis of the understanding that entrepreneurs need both finance and know-how to develop and grow their business.
- ***Ensure sex-disaggregated data are collected so as to meaningfully inform policy dialogue on gender issues.*** Data scarcity and unevenness constitutes a bottleneck in the identification of gender priorities and actions to promote gender equality in the economy and society. For example, the World Bank is working in partnership with the United Nations and selected country statistical offices to enhance data collection in four priority areas: physical and financial asset ownership and control; time use; employment; and, welfare. Similarly, the Islamic Development Bank has established a partnership with the Development of Arab Women's Observatory for the collection of sex-disaggregated data.
- ***Establish public-private partnerships for development, by bringing together the public and private sectors under the PPP financing model,*** which allows MDBs to capitalise on the specific strengths of each sector. The public private collaboration model presents an opportunity to address

gender gaps at project level by supporting increased labour force participation, fair and equitable access to services, access to finance and policy dialogue.

- ***Obtain private sector clients' commitment to promote gender equality in their businesses.*** The need to strengthen the private sector's engagement in the delivery of the SDGs has been clearly identified and endorsed. The private sector is critical for the SDG agenda, whether it is for economic growth generally, or job creation – particularly through SMEs, for infrastructure, or in energy security and energy efficiency. Conducting a cost-benefit analysis that shows the economic and reputational benefits of integrating gender considerations in projects/investments funded by the MDBs can be catalytic in convincing private sector clients to do their part in promoting gender equality. For example, a number of EBRD clients in the Manufacturing and Services industry in Turkey have committed to increase the number of women in their workforces and boards, as a condition to their loan agreement. They understand it makes good business sense as well – good use is made of available talent, the employer also increases its reputation as a 'a progressive and open employer' and this sends out a message to the market and serves as a good demonstration effect. The same can be said for requiring a certain percentage of women to be on the boards of companies in which the EBRD has equity. It is a matter of good governance from a banking perspective (ie to have as diverse decision making as possible) but also a matter of gender equality.

II Approaches MDBs can employ to advance the full and effective participation, voice, and agency of women and girls at global, regional and national levels support the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

1. Policy Dialogue

Throughout their investments and operations, all MDBs will continue **to address policy and regulatory barriers** restricting women's advancement in the economy and society. This will also be achieved by joining forces with partners active in the same field. Most of the MDBs support **research on gender issues** and **undertake policy dialogue with counterparts** in their respective regions of operations, with the aim to create an enabling policy and legal environment for both women and men. This includes dialogue on gender equality laws, sector-specific policies and legal reforms. For example, working alongside a private sector client in the extractive industry in the Kyrgyz Republic, it became apparent to the EBRD staff that certain professions could only be accessed by men. This limited the opportunities afforded to women and therefore detrimentally impacted employment opportunities and efficiency gains. An EBRD commissioned study showed that the Kyrgyz GDP would have grown by between 0.2 and 0.4 percentage points faster each year between 1990 and 2013, should the gender gap in labour force participation have stayed at its 1990 level (rather than reduced as it was the case). This study helped to make the business case for more women in the labour force and more women with the necessary skills, alongside legal access to work in technical jobs in high wage sectors and can now be used as a basis for policy discussion with the government.

Another example of how MDBs can support the work and initiatives of other stakeholders can be illustrated by an example in Central Asia. The National Association of Business Women of Tajikistan, and the State Investment Committee, organised a conference with participants from 4 Central Asian countries to identify problems and priorities of women entrepreneurs in the region. As a follow up to the Symposium, EBRD sponsored the creation of a Public-Private

Taskforce to support Women entrepreneurship in Tajikistan, and has supported the Taskforce technically during its first year of operations.

2. Addressing the Lack of Sex Disaggregated Data

Aware of the challenges MDBs face in realising their objectives in this area, joining forces with other institutions will assist with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. **Addressing the lack of sex-disaggregated data** constitutes a significant challenge and a clear priority for the MDBs, as with inadequate data, it makes it more difficult to inform policy dialogue and gender inclusive project design. To make significant progress on this, MDBs will need to work with the UN system, national governments and academia.

3. Monitoring and Building Capacity

Even if gender policies and legislation have been adopted, their enforcement and monitoring of implementation may at times be weak or absent. **Strengthening the capacity of MDB clients to closely monitor and evaluate the implementation of projects and policies conducive to the advancement of gender equality** can allow enough time for course-correction and robust implementation. Other partners in this endeavour can be civil society.

4. Generating and Disseminating Knowledge

At the same time, **producing rigorous and evidence-based knowledge** of what really works in closing the gender gaps can be instrumental, while creating such knowledge is often quite expensive (for instance, conducting impact evaluation studies). Many stakeholders need to work together on this so that, firstly, there is no duplication but instead there is enhanced learning and, secondly, that the learning is shared. Partnerships between MDBs, civil society, academia, the private sector, the UN system and other stakeholders are again essential. The World Bank focuses on creating evidence of what works and what doesn't, including through ground-breaking impact evaluation studies by the Gender Innovation Labs (GILs). One encouraging example of innovation comes from the Brazilian state of Pernambuco. The WB has provided a \$500 million Development Policy Loan to help the Brazilian government make gender-based violence part of its broader strategy. Before project start, the numbers were compelling: a third of all women and girls in Pernambuco were exposed to high rates of physical violence, while fourteen percent were subjected to sexual violence. The WB worked to help promote women's economic empowerment with the setting up of a permanent Women's Secretariat with twelve regional coordinators throughout the state; and also dealt with the physical nature of the harm by training 2000 health workers and law enforcement officers in gender-related issues.

- 5.** All of the above needs to be done in collaboration with other key partners. An important point to note is that, finally, implementation of such policies faces additional hurdles when investing and operating in fragile or post-conflict affected states.

To conclude, MDBs can play a rather unique and at times useful role in establishing and rolling out Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships working towards gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At times they can leverage influence and resources and at other times their expertise and position can be leveraged to provide resources and know-how.