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Conference Concept Note

**Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Globalization:
From Goal to Governance**

Sponsored by Columbia University and UN Women

**Columbia University Club
15 West 43rd Street
New York, New York
March 13, 2015**

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Executive Summary

This one-day conference, held in conjunction with the 2015 meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women, will address the challenges posed by globalization, and the growing importance of transnational social, economic and cultural processes to the realization of the post-2015 agenda. In particular, by convening policy-makers and other practitioners, researchers and activists, the conference intends to explore *how* such challenges can be met, adopting *which* approaches to policy-making and realization, utilizing *what* methodologies, and *by whom*. The program includes four panels focused on transnational issues, or on the transnational aspects of issues that may appear to be primarily domestic, together with a lunch-time discussion on gender issues in global migration (see Appendix I). The panels will focus on forward-looking economic and social strategies; global production chains; global care and reproduction chains; and freedom from violence in the context of conflict and displacement.

Rationale

The Sustainable Development Goals that will guide the post-2015 agenda will likely include a stand-alone goal to achieve gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights informed by the proposals of UN Women[i] and others. But, as UN Secretary-General Bank Ki Moon has noted, in an "irreversibly interconnected" world, the challenges to the realization of these goals do not respect national boundaries.[ii] This is as true of the challenges to the stand-alone goal as it is to other aspects of the agenda. Migratory processes, epidemics, climate change, cross-border conflicts, potentially "borderless" information technologies, trade agreements and international capital flows, global production and service delivery chains and globalized economic crises, to name but a few examples, all reflect and impact gender relations. These are not phenomena that can be considered marginal either to the general stand-alone goal or to any of its constitutive elements: ensuring women's freedom from violence; promoting their capacity to develop their capabilities by attaining the requisite access to resources; and ensuring their equal capacity to influence decision-making, in private and public institutions, through effective voice, leadership and participation.

Freedom from violence, for example, entails addressing the intersections between migration, urbanization and gender. In a world characterized by a high degree of international mobility, it also entails addressing seemingly technical but in fact highly significant questions such as the trans-border enforcement of protection orders. The *development of capabilities* requires access to information technologies – including, to the competencies required to be both producers and consumers of content. Such access enables active participation in long-distance education programs, the identification of suppliers or buyers of products or the establishment of civil society alliances across borders. But, if access to information technologies can catalyze a virtuous cycle in which connectivity and knowledge promote empowerment, exclusions resulting from infrastructure inadequacy, high hardware and/or operating costs, and all forms of illiteracy, including with respect to the functioning of information technologies themselves, can set in a negative cycle that reinforces inequalities in the capability to develop capabilities. And, the possibility of participating in *decision-making and leadership* depends on the ability to surmount marginalizing practices that may be implemented or influenced by global state and non-state actors.

While the international community has recognized the importance of women's engagement in peace-building processes, it has had difficulty realizing this objective. Although many current conflicts are intra-national, here, too, transnational processes play a role: just as external actors have been found to foment conflicts and determine their evolution, they may also contribute to shaping the ensuing peace-building processes. Transnational corporations provide a further example of the nexus between globalization, transnational processes, and the promotion of women's participation in decision-making and leadership. A great deal of public attention has focused on women's still largely insufficient presence in the upper echelons of corporate governance. But women's capacity to exercise *voice* within, and with respect to, corporate conduct is not only a function of their participation in boards of directors and higher management. Rather, it is also affected by the organization of labor, and, therefore, by the ways in which globalized production and service delivery processes are molded through trade agreements, and, in turn, contribute to molding them. In short, the components of the stand-alone goal require recognizing the ways in which transnational social processes shape and re-shape gender relations and affect the prospects for gender equality policies.

How, then, are the ensuing challenges to be addressed? The international system is largely predicated on sovereign national states. At the same time, governance is being transformed from above and from below. The number and complexity of regional organizations has grown; the power of non-state actors, from corporations to NGOs to armed groups, has multiplied; and sub-national actors, such as cities, have shown an increasing capacity to interact on an international scale. These transformations entail an increase in the array of actors who may be involved in gender-equality policy-making. While this multiplies the number of possible interlocutors (and to the resources they may provide), it also engenders a fragmentation of the sources of authority and the rules of decision-making. In this context, can the current forms of international cooperation and assistance continue to provide a sufficient framework for the realization of the stand-alone goal, or will reliance on these widen the 'implementation gap' that has so often

been noted in respect to policies designed to promote gender equality? If so, what supplementary or alternative means can be devised? Specifically, how can aid and trade, regulation and taxation, private and public action, and investment be mobilized – as Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has said will be necessary for the realization of the SDGs generally --- to promote gender equality policies? And, what other policy measures can be and should be considered. **All questions which lead us to ask more generally, how does globalization solicit us to rethink the policy process?**

The Conference

The conference intends to address these issues by focusing on five transnational themes and the ways in which globalization affects policy development and realization in these areas. (Appendix I provides the current program. Appendix II provides examples of cross-cutting themes relating to the processes by which gender equality policies are defined, implemented and evaluated.)

The conference includes two morning panels on forward-looking economic and social strategies, and global production chains; a lunchtime discussion of gender issues in global migration; and two afternoon panels on global care and reproduction chains, and freedom from violence, particularly in the context of conflict and displacement.

While each panel will focus on a particular substantive theme, it will also provide an opportunity to discuss cross-cutting topics. Examples of such cross-cutting topics include how 'equality,' 'empowerment' and 'rights' have been framed by policy-makers in different contexts, and the interactive processes that have (or have not) allowed for interchange between local and global actors; the multiplication, over-layering and/or fragmentation of the array of actors involved in a particular thematic area; and the means of policy realization that have been developed (including the development of indicators; states' adoption of regulatory approaches; the development of voluntary codes; and the use of practices promoted by international organizations, such as gender-responsive budgeting or gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation).

A web-based report of the proceedings, discussing both 'thematic' and 'cross-cutting' issues, will be published electronically.

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[i] UN Women, *A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components*, June 2013.
[ii] See *The Road to Dignity by 2030:Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet*, Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post 2015 Agenda, New York, December 4, 2014.

GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND GLOBALIZATION:
FROM GOAL TO GOVERNANCE
-PROGRAM -

9:00- 9:20   Welcome and Opening Remarks by Dean Merit Janow, Columbia/SIPA and [UN Women representative, to be confirmed]

9: 20 -10:40   Panel I: Strategies for More Inclusive Economic Development and Stronger Social Protection Schemes

Topics to consider:

> Gender-equitable policy responses to global economic crises and deepening global inequalities, including financial system reform and "social protection floor" initiatives; Feminist proposals for a "pink New Deal;"
> Gender implications of new financing schemes to promote sustainable development (including Tobin taxes, climate funds, social or development impact bonds, crowd-sourcing platforms and blended financing platforms);
> Strategies for effective mainstreaming of gender equality policies in the work of the organizations called for by the Secretary-General in his synthesis report, including with respect to: the expert technical assistance group to be tasked with developing a coherent framework that accounts for climate finance and ODA, the Technology Bank and the Science, Technology, and Innovation Capacity Building Mechanism for LDCs.

Panelists:

➢ Radikha Balakrishnan, Executive Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University
➢ Kevin Cassidy, Senior Communications and External Relations Officer, International Labour Organization Office for the United Nations
➢ Diane Elson, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Essex
➢ Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Professor of International Affairs, New School for Social Research
➢ Liane Schalatek, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Washington DC

10:50 – 12:10   Panel II: The Globalization of Production: Uses and Abuses of Gendered Labor Markets

Topics to consider:

> ILO Conventions, international labor standards and trade agreements (including with respect to export processing zones)
> Modes of production and service delivery: contractors, sub-contractors and problems of monitoring and accountability
> Ways in which global production chains promote the migration of women, including from rural to urban areas
> Global corporate codes of conduct and their actual and potential impact on women workers

Experiences of transnational mobilization of women workers

Panelists:

- ➢ Kalpona Akter, Executive Director, Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity
- ➢ Judy Gearhart, Executive Director, International Labor Rights Forum, and Adjunct Professor, Columbia University/SIPA
- ➢ Lauren Gula, Manager, Social Sustainability and Women's Empowerment, United Nations Global Compact
- ➢ Rosa Pavanelli, Secretary General, Public Services International

12:20 – 1:40   On-site luncheon. Speakers will address issues related to gender issues in global migration.

Speakers:

- ➢ Gregory Maniatis, Senior European Policy Fellow, Migration Policy Institute, and Advisor to the United Nations Special Representative on Migration
- ➢ Bianca Pomeranzi, Senior Advisor for Gender and Development, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Member, CEDAW Committee
- ➢ [Philippine government representative, to be confirmed]

1:50 – 3:10   Panel III: The Globalization of Reproduction: Commodifying Care and Procreation across Borders

Topics to consider:

The Development of Care Chains:

Push/pull factors affecting the global market for care workers (including demographic trends and the nexus between labor market dynamics in states that "export" and in those that "import" care workers);
The imperfect over-lap of domestic work and care work (and the global demand for each)
National policies – and the conflicts among them -- in regard to care workers, both as emigrants and immigrants (including with respect to visas and remittances);
Globalization and the possibilities of international organization: the mobilization of domestic workers and the ILO Convention.

The Development of Procreative Chains:

Push/pull factors affecting the emerging global market for babies, adoption, gametes and gestational services (including demographic and attitudinal changes);
National policies towards the emergence of international commercial surrogacy (and the conflicts among them), specifically with regard to gametes, pregnancy as a form of commodified labor and the status and rights of the women, men and children involved;
The adoption convention and its relevance or inapplicability with respect to the possibilities of attaining a global agreement on reproductive surrogacy;

Regional organizations, regional standards and judicial enforcement.

Panelists:

➢ Yasmine Ergas, Lecturer and Director, Gender and Public Policy Specialization, Columbia/SIPA
➢ Maja Groff, Senior Legal Officer, Hague Conference on Private International Law [via skype]
➢ Elizabeth Tang, International Coordinator, International Domestic Workers Federation

3:20 – 4:40 Panel IV: Promoting Freedom from Violence in a Globalized World

Topics to consider:

Violence against women in transnational contexts, including:

Conflict and post-conflict settings, humanitarian crises and economic crises;
Migration, voluntary and forced: risk scenarios for migrant women in urban contexts;
trafficking; coerced prostitution; bridal markets; child marriages.

Panelists:

➢ Dale Buscher, Senior Director for Programs, Women's Refugee Commission, and Adjunct Professor, Columbia/SIPA
➢ Aurora Javate-de Dios, Professor and Executive Director, Women and Gender Institute, Miriam College, and Philippine Representative to the ASEAN Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
➢ [Elisabeth Lindenmayer, Lecturer and Director, UN Studies Program and Acting Director, International Conflict Resolution Specialization, Columbia/SIPA, to be confirmed]
➢ [Karen Naimer or Susannah Sirkin, Physicians for Human Rights, to be confirmed]
➢ Jessica Stern, Director, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission

4:50 – 5:10 Concluding Remarks, including identifying issues for further analysis and action.

EXAMPLES OF CROSS-CUTTING THEMES, WHICH MAY BE CONSIDERED BY EACH PANEL, RELATING TO GENDER EQUALITY POLICY-MAKING AND REALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

- **Overview.** Key questions regard: What approaches to global governance do the various strategies described in the panels imply; how do they take into account the dynamics of 'global/national/local' interaction and the iterative processes of policy definition and redefinition; how are the underlying assumptions embedded in each strategy challenged by globalization; how might different actors approach the same issues differently?

- **Global policy formation, the definition of key terms and the development of common indicators**. Has a common terminology emerged in each of the issue-areas considered, what role have IOs and treaty bodies played in its development and has it given rise to indicators that can ensure comparability? Is this a desirable goal, and, if so, what accommodations may it require? Can uniformity of understandings and measurements are accompanied by sensitivity to local understandings and practices? If so, how? If not, what use is uniformity? What are its effects? Generally, what practices underlie the emergence of a common terminology and agreed-upon indicators and indices and what inclusions and exclusions do they entail?

  Thus, participants in the panel on Freedom from Violence in a Globalized World might discuss existing variations in understandings of violence against women and how these affect states' interpretations of their due diligence obligations, the likelihood of prosecutions under international criminal law or the prospects for inter-country cooperation with respect to the cross-border enforcement of protection orders? To provide another example, participants in this panel might consider how differing standards affect inter-country cooperation with respect to trafficking. Participants could also explore how varying understandings of VAW are reflected in indicators of VAW? Have IOs and treaty bodies successfully engendered uniform understandings and with what effects? How have these understandings been reflected in indicators and indices? What practices underlie the formation of such indicators and indices and what inclusions and exclusions do they entail?

- **Policy networks**: how have policy networks emerged? What roles do IOs, GOs, and NGOs play? What processes have shaped the capacity of different actors' to gain access to such networks and exercise voice? Have such networks functioned as knowledge exchanges? As advocacy mechanisms? With what effects, when and where? How can their development be sustained? Should they be institutionalized, and if so, why and how?

- **Key sites of transnational policy-making**: What role do IOs play as compared to national governments and private actors (such as corporations)? What are the implications of multiple IOs operating in overlapping policy arenas – e.g., with respect to global production chains, the ILO, World Bank, IMF, UNDP, UNCTAD, among others? Does this lead to forum shopping by advocates? Does it lessen the likelihood of effective policy-making or are there benefits to be derived from the specialization that characterizes each IO? Are inter-agency cooperation mechanisms effective in the various

areas under consideration? What are the implications of fragmentation and the possibilities of greater cooperation for CSOs?

- **Relations between international law-making and other forms of global policy-making**: what factors have facilitated the agreement of treaties in some areas (e.g., domestic workers and adoption) but not in others (e.g. commercial surrogacy or corporations' human rights obligations)? How have international standards been incorporated into national legal orders? Has such incorporation required constitutional (re)interpretation (for example, with respect to the jurisdictional issues, such as the role of customary legal authorities, or with respect to substantive matters, such as the attribution of civil status)? How have 'soft law' measures (e.g., corporate codes of conduct, UN guiding principles) been deployed alongside or as alternatives to binding legal measures to attain particular objectives (e.g. with respect to global production chains)?

- **The means of policy-realization**: What means are currently being deployed in relation to the issues considered by each panel? How have law-making and/or 'naming and shaming' been supplemented (or supplanted) by close engagement with policy-making and realization, e.g. through gender-responsive budgeting? What strategies of 'mainstreaming' have been adopted, and with what degree of effectiveness? How has implementation been monitored? Have fiscal policies been deployed? Have administrative practices changed?