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High Level Panel on the Empowerment of Women

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Ending all forms of violence & discrimination against women and ensuring the empowerment and advancement of women in global economies and social order (Planet 50-50 by 2030 and #HeforShe).

Report of the UA-MUNC Secretary-General

Introduction

When she first started practicing law as a young female attorney, Ann Green, now CEO of ANZ Lao, was asked to make coffee and pick up dry cleaning (by men), simply because she was a young woman. Meanwhile, in a different continent, Yayi Bayam Diouf, became the first female to fish in her small rural fishing village in Senegal, despite initially being told by the men in her community that the fish wouldn't take bait from a woman.

The difficulties faced by Yayi and Ann in entering the labor force of their country, and at the workplace are not unique to them, but rather, they are part of a disheartening reality for **many women across the globe**. While no single measure can capture the complete situation, the relative gaps between women and men are noticeable across four key areas: health, education, economy and politics.¹

Background

This year's International Women's Day was just six months after the launch of the most ambitious development agenda in history.² In the *Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, world leaders have pledged to '**Leave No-One Behind**' and achieve gender equality by 2030. This is a huge undertaking, despite the significant achievements of the last 15 years. While it is true that more girls are in school than ever before,

¹ ibid

² *The Global Gender Gap Report 2016* (Geneva: World Economic Forum), United Nations Secretary- General's Highlevel Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment(with Tyson.L and J. Klugman),2016.Leave No One Behind: A call for Action for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, New York: United Nations Secretary General's High Level Panel on Women's Empowerment



and boys and girls are now enrolling for primary school in equal numbers, the fact remains, however, that girls are much more likely to face disadvantages than boys – and this is all too evident when it comes to education.³ UNESCO's *eAtlas of Gender Equality in Education* shows that a) girls are still the first to be denied their right to education, and b) two thirds of the 757 million adults around the world who cannot read or write are women.⁴ This shows that illiteracy still remains an issue that disproportionately affects women. This is an increasingly critical issue that must be addressed over the course of the new agenda, and the targets to eliminate all gender disparities in child, youth and adult education are much needed and welcomed. The latest report by the International Labour Organization shows that the progress that *has* been made in women's access to education over the last 20 years has not translated into comparable improvements in employment.⁵

The positive ripple effect of educating girls and women can be seen at all levels of society. Education empowers individuals and can improve livelihoods across the board. For example, children of educated mothers are twice as likely to survive past the age of five. A girl who completes primary school is three times less likely to contract HIV.⁶ One year of secondary school can increase a girl's potential income by up to 25%. These economic benefits go beyond the family and immediate community – they can reduce a nation's poverty levels and boost its GDP. Indeed, improved education has accounted for about 50% of economic growth in OECD countries over the past 50 years – and half of that is due to more women going to school and staying in school.⁷ As well as improving life outcomes economically, education can empower women so that they are less vulnerable to forms of exploitation, such as human trafficking.⁸

While it is always important to highlight the transformative power of female education, this in itself is not new information. And yet still, twice as many girls as boys will never start school.⁹ However, there is cause for optimism. Unlike its predecessor, the 2030 Agenda recognizes the links between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, as well as the links between inequality, marginalization and poverty. It acknowledges that both gender equality and education for all play a critical role in building a peaceful and sustainable world.¹⁰

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) endorses the UN's Sustainable Development Project in which economic empowerment for women has been prioritised.¹¹ The commission acknowledges that women's economic empowerment acts as a fulcrum in alleviating poverty.¹²

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ OECD Report 2012

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ The costs of gender inequality are well documented, and at the current pace it will take another 170 years to close the gender gap worldwide. See World Economic Forum. 2016. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2016* (Geneva: World Economic Forum)

⁸ UNESCO E Atlas on Gender Equality in Education

⁹ UNESCO E Atlas on Gender Equality in Education

¹⁰ Leave No One Behind – A call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment; UN Secretary General Report on the High Level Panel on Economic Empowerment of Women.

¹¹ Commission on the Status of Women 61st Session- Women's Economic Empowerment in the changing world of Work

¹² OECD Report 2015



Many female entrepreneurs face disproportionate obstacles in accessing and competing in markets. These include women's relative lack of mobility, capacity and technical skills in relation to men.¹³ These difficulties represent violations of women's human rights to work and their rights at work, with gender-discriminatory laws still in existence in 155 countries, resulting in a gender wage gap of 23 percent globally.¹⁴ In addition, women represent 75 percent of informal employment, in low-paid and undervalued jobs that are usually unprotected by labour laws. Economic empowerment is about making markets work for women and empowering women to compete in markets.¹⁵ Globally, women and men participate in labour markets on an unequal basis. In 2013, the male employment-to-population ratio was at 72.2 per cent, while for females it stood at 47.1 per cent.¹⁶ Worldwide women earn on average almost a quarter less than men.¹⁷

Out of 143 countries examined by IMF, almost 90 per cent have at least one gender-based restriction on women's economic participation, with 28 countries having 10 or more restrictions on women's participation.¹⁸ As of December 2016, women on average comprised approximately 23% of all national parliamentarians around the world.¹⁹ As of June 2016, there were 38 states around the world in which women accounted for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, including 4 chambers with no women at all.²⁰ Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children (below 18 years of age).²¹ In the current decade, 14.2 million girls under 18 will be married every year i.e. 39,000 girls being forced into marriage each day.²² In 30 countries, there are at least 200 million women and girls alive today who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting. Moreover, in most of these countries, it happened before the girls reached the age of 5.²³ Finally, it is estimated that globally a third of women report having experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes.²⁴

Without gender equality and women's empowerment, it is impossible to establish fair political systems, alleviate extreme poverty or ensure comprehensive responses and recovery from war, conflict and disasters. In essence, it will be impossible for the world to achieve sustainability without equality for women and girls in every sphere of society.

The gender dimensions of infrastructure and road building programmes are often ignored. Infrastructure programmes should be designed to maximize poor peoples' access to the benefits of roads, telecommunications, energy and water. Infrastructure initiatives that help women to carry out everyday chores more efficiently, such as the supply of piped water, free up time for

¹³ OECD Report 2012

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/comm/publ/documents/publication/wcms_233953.pdf

¹⁷ http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW_progressreport.pdf

¹⁸ http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW_progressreport.pdf

¹⁹ <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2015/sdn1502.pdf>

²⁰ <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

²¹ <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

²² https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR..pdf

²³ <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

²⁴ https://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC_2016_brochure_final_UNICEF_SPREAD.pdf;

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>



educational opportunities, productive work, and participation in community life and decision-making.²⁵

Only half of women participate in the labour force compared to three quarters of men, and in most developing countries it is as low as 25 percent. Women spend 2.5 times more time and effort than men on unpaid care work and household responsibilities.²⁶ All of this results in women taking home 1/10th of the global income, while accounting for 2/3^{rds} of global working hours.²⁷ These inequalities have devastating immediate and long-term negative impacts on women who have a lower lifetime income, have saved less, and yet face higher overall retirement and healthcare costs due to a longer life expectancy.²⁸ Women usually invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than men.²⁹ Increasing the role of women in the economy is part of the solution to the financial and economic crises and critical for economic resilience and growth.³⁰

Women's economic empowerment is about transforming the world of work, which is still very patriarchal and which treats the equal voice, participation and leadership of women as an anomaly, tokenism, compartment or add on. Despite recognizing progress, structural barriers continue to hinder progress towards women's economic empowerment globally.³¹

Women in all professions face what we call sticky floors, leaking pipelines and broken ladders, glass ceilings and glass walls! At the current pace, it may take 170 years to achieve economic equality among men and women – according to estimates from the World Economic Forum's latest Gender Gap Report (The Global Gender Gap Report 2016).³²

Agenda 21 acknowledges the role of women in natural resources management at the local level and emphasizes the need for more women in senior positions to contribute positively to the implementation of environmental policy. (36) Agenda 21's approach to gender equality and its achievements. A few explicit references to women and water resource management (WRM) without consideration to the gender implications of the WRM policies and strategies were noted. The macro-oriented, technology-focused and supply-oriented approach of Agenda 21 on WRM hinges upon the inclusion of a gender perspective. There are two levels of implications of gender-blind intervention in relation to WRM: the issue of social justice and rights, and the negative impact of the neglect of gender inequality on overall planning and success of interventions. The inclusion of a gender perspective at policy and planning levels to facilitate the resolution of inconsistencies, as well as the importance of water sources and patterns of use knowledge for adequate policy development and planning was suggested. It is important that

²⁵ International Labour Organization: Women at work: Trends (2016), Geneva:ILO; OECD Report 2012

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ Inter press news agency-<http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/03/women-in-the-changing-world-of-work-planet-5050-by-2030/> by Laxmi Puri- Assistant Secy General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women

³² *ibid*



the WRM principle application utilize a sociocultural and gender perspective at both the community and household levels before decisions are made on WRM interventions.³³

To accelerate the move to a planet 50/50 in women's economic empowerment and work will require a transformation of both the public and private sector environments and world of work they create for women and also how they change it to make it a women's space of productive and fulfilling work.³⁴

It will mean adopting necessary laws, policies and special measures by governments. It means their actively regulating and providing incentives to companies and enterprises to become gender equal employers, supply chains and incubators of innovation and entrepreneurship.³⁵

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, together with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA, 2015) (on financing for development) position gender equality and the empowerment of women as critical and essential drivers of sustainable development. There is a Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality (Goal 5) which seeks to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" and sets out global targets to address many of the remaining obstacles to gender inequality (AAAA, 2015).³⁶

Achieving these targets would have a multiplier effect across all other development areas, including ensuring equal access to decent work and full and productive employment (SDG 8), ending poverty (SDG-1), food security (SDG-2), universal health (SDG-3), quality education (SDG-4) and reducing inequalities (SDG-10).³⁷

Transformative change is not only possible but it would generate tremendous dividends for the economy. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, if women were to play an identical role in labour markets to men, as much as USD 28 trillion, or 26 percent, could be added to global annual GDP by 2025.³⁸

Moreover, the total value of unpaid care and domestic work, dominated by women, is estimated to be between 10 and 39 per cent of national GDPs, and can surpass that of manufacturing, commerce, transportation and other key sectors. With women's economic empowerment the global economy can therefore yield inclusive growth that generates decent work for all and reduces poverty ensuring that no one is left behind.³⁹

With the United Nations Observance of International Women's Day, we celebrate the tectonic shift in the way that gender equality and women's economic empowerment has been prioritized and valued in the international development agenda and express the resolve that we will all do

³³ Ibid; Hannan 1997

³⁴ ibid

³⁵ ibid

³⁶ UN Economic and Social Council, Thematic Issue Before the Commission: The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2004/9), 2003, pp. 3-18

³⁷ ibid

³⁸ ibid

³⁹ ibid



everything it takes including transformative financing to achieve the ambitious goal of Planet 50/50 in the world of work by 2030.⁴⁰

The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality has been increasingly discussed in recent years.⁴¹ In 1995, the *Platform for Action* of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing reiterated that “equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice,” also emphasizing that “a transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centered sustainable development”.⁴² Similarly, the *Programme of Action* of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo encouraged that “special efforts should be made to emphasize men’s shared responsibility and promote their active involvement” in family responsibilities, reproductive health, access to income and education, and preventing violence against women.⁴³ The inclusion of men in achieving gender equality was also discussed at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, the 27th and 28th special sessions of the General Assembly in 2001 and 2002, and the Expert Group Meeting of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (now part of UN-Women) in 2003.⁴⁴

Gender inequality allows for violence against women to continue unabated. The UN has found that globally, one in three women will experience violence in her lifetime, with most violence against women perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner. The World Health Organization, London School of Health and Tropical Medicine, and the World Bank Group have done a lot to consolidate and expand on what we know about the prevalence of violence against women, and effective prevention and response strategies, but there is still a lot we do not know.⁴⁵

The world needs a big shift in attitudes, priorities and values to build a “Planet 50-50 by 2030”.⁴⁶ It will take more than goals and roadmaps to reach a day when women and men are truly treated as equals in the world - and before women everywhere in the world can make decisions about their lives, health, education, families and their employment based on what they want - not what they are forced into because of gender discrimination.⁴⁷ To build a Planet 50-50, we also need to pay more attention to gaps between women themselves. We need to ensure the commitments we make and actions we take reach even the most vulnerable, the most marginalized and those women who are the hardest to reach - those who are still too often left behind by development and progress, and whose voices are left out of global debates and discussions about what women need.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ UN Economic and Social Council, *Thematic Issue Before the Commission: The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2004/9)*, 2003

⁴² UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995

⁴³ United Nations, *International Conference on Population and Development – ICPD - Programme of Action*, 1994.

⁴⁴ UN Economic and Social Council, *Thematic Issue Before the Commission: The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2004/9)*, 2003, pp. 3-18

⁴⁵ BUILDING A "PLANET 50-50 BY 2030- "Building A "Planet 50-50 By 2030". *The Huffington Post*. N.p., 2017. Web. 21 Apr. 2017.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ *ibid*



It is indeed possible to have a gender equal planet by 2030. We need to work to get there much faster, because another 15 years of gender inequality is not acceptable. However, in order to achieve this end, it is important to recognize that it is neither the lack of resources, nor lack of know-how that has prevented us from achieving this end to date. The international community must work to put women and girls first – because a Planet 50-50 is not just in the best interest of women and girls, but it is in the best interest of humanity as a whole.⁴⁹

International Framework

Gender equality and the empowerment of women have been important foundational principles of the United Nations (UN) since its inception. The *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) established that human rights were not dependent on sex, and since its creation, CSW has promoted the rights and status of women instilled in the *Charter*.⁵⁰ The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* confirmed that men and women share “equal rights,” and that all are “entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”.⁵¹ In 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), which emphasizes the need to eliminate gender discrimination and gender-based violence.⁵² CEDAW is one of the most pivotal international documents on establishing gender equality and women’s rights.⁵³

The High Level Panel (HLP)

The HLP meets in two different formats: once every four years under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, and once every year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).⁵⁴ Under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, heads of state and government officials meet for two days. At the end of their meeting, they adopt an international declaration on sustainable development, which is ultimately submitted to the UN General Assembly.⁵⁵ Under the auspices of ECOSOC, Member States, UN system entities, civil society representatives, and other stakeholders meet annually to discuss the progress on the 2030 Agenda.⁵⁶ This is followed by a three-day meeting at a ministerial level, which is attended by ministers and other government officials who work in different departments, such as environment or foreign affairs.

⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁰ European Commission, *The Role of Men in Gender Equality*, 2013

⁵¹ Barbara Rodriguez, assistant director, women’s empowerment programme, The Asia Foundation, Washington DC, USA,

⁵² Charter of the United Nations, 1945, art. UN-Women, *Short History of the Commission on the Status of Women*, 2013,

⁵³ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (A/RES/217 A (III)), 1948, art.

⁵⁴ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (A/RES/34/180), 1979, art,

⁵⁵ UN DPI, *New High- level Political Forum Starts Work to Reinvigorate and Accelerate Sustainable Development Action*, 2013.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*; UN General Assembly, *Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development* (A/RES/67/290), 2013, p. 3.



The thematic focus is decided by the UN General Assembly.⁵⁷ At the end of each meeting, a ministerial declaration is adopted, which is then integrated into ECOSOC's report to the UN General Assembly.⁵⁸ Starting in 2016, the forum will conduct voluntary reviews on the follow-up and implementation of the 2030 Agenda in both developing and developed countries.⁵⁹

What is the High-Level Panel (HLP) on Women's Economic Empowerment?

Investing in women's economic empowerment is intrinsic to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth.⁶⁰

Yet despite the important progress that has been made in these areas, large gender gaps in economic opportunities and outcomes still remain across all countries and regions. Therefore in the context of the 2030 Agenda, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the first-ever High-Level Panel for Women's Economic Empowerment.⁶¹ The Panel, comprised of influential leaders from various fields of government, business, academia, and civil society, will make action-oriented recommendations on how to improve economic outcomes for women in the context of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, promoting women's leadership in driving economic growth, and galvanizing political will power.⁶²

Why was the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment Established?

Women's economic empowerment is critical to achieving both the SDGs and Planet 50/50 by 2030. With the recent adoption of the SDGs, now is the time to address the large gender gaps in economic opportunities and outcomes that exist in almost all countries. Women earn less, have fewer assets, bear the burden of unpaid work and care, and are largely concentrated in vulnerable and low-paying activities.⁶³ To illustrate such a disparity, the gap between women's and men's labor force participation is 26%, while women spend 2.5 times more time performing unpaid care and domestic work than men. Globally, women are paid on average, 24% less than men. Moreover, 75% of women's employment in developing regions is informal and unprotected. These gaps constrain women's rights and hinder economic growth and productivity. Public investment and financial commitment from donors to women's economic empowerment is insufficient and the gendered impacts of international public and private investments are not well recognized or understood.⁶⁴ Significantly scaled-up actions and political will are required to

⁵⁷ <http://www.empowerwomen.org/en/who-we-are/initiatives/sg-high-level-panel-on-women-economic-empowerment#thepanel>

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰ <https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/who-we-are/initiatives/sg-high-level-panel-on-womens-economic-empowerment#thepanel>

⁶¹ *ibid*

⁶² *ibid*

⁶³ *ibid*

⁶⁴ *ibid*



ensure that governments, development organisations, and others ensure women and girls benefit from and participate in sustainable economic development.⁶⁵

Why establish a High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment now?

With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development coming into effect, 2017 presents an unprecedented opportunity to bring the countries and citizens of the world together to embark on a new path to improve the lives of people everywhere. This new agenda is based on 17 goals, including a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5). This particular global goal clearly recognizes the importance of women’s empowerment as a prerequisite for ending poverty, with a specific focus on their economic empowerment.⁶⁶ However, for the goals to be reached, everyone needs to do their part: governments, the private and public sectors, and civil society. So the moment is now to provide concrete guidance for implementation.⁶⁷

Against this backdrop, the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level-Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment has been created to:

- demonstrate leadership and commitment
- highlight key areas for accelerating women’s economic empowerment, and
- make action-oriented recommendations on how governments, businesses, civil societies and development partners can work together to improve economic outcomes for women and girls.⁶⁸

Panel Members

Serving in their personal capacities, the Co-chairs of the Panel are Ms. Simona Scarpaleggia, CEO of IKEA Switzerland and Mr. Luis Guillermo Solis, President of Costa Rica. Other members of the panel include the leaders of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank Group, UN Women, and a diverse range of eminent gender equality actors, economics experts, academics, trade union leaders, and business and government representatives from all over the world.⁶⁹

What is the expected output of the Panel?

In September 2016 the Panel presented its first report to the UN Secretary-General. Lead author Professor Laura Tyson drew on rigorous evidence and broad-based consultations to highlight best practices and provide action-oriented recommendations. The report called upon everyone to do their part to place women’s economic empowerment at the center of the global agenda and laid out commitments to specific actions and interventions to demonstrate that progress is possible now.⁷⁰ These actions range from the scaling up of existing initiatives, the creation of innovative programmes, to governmental action like treaty ratification and legislative reforms. It

⁶⁵ ibid

⁶⁶ ibid

⁶⁷ ibid

⁶⁸ ibid

⁶⁹ ibid

⁷⁰ ibid



outline a strategic agenda focused on major issues where the panelists, both individually and collectively, from member states, civil society, and the private and public sectors have brought about change in the near term.⁷¹ Building on the findings of September's report, the Panel was in session and presented its second report in March 2017.

The inaugural meeting of the High-Level Panel was held on 15 March 2016 during the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN Headquarters in New York. A global consultation followed during the continuation of the meeting.⁷² The Panel held its next meetings in June 2016 in Costa Rica and, coinciding with the 71st High-Level debate of the UN General Assembly in September 2016, at UN Headquarters in New York. A series of regional consultations continued in various fora for several months at the regional and international levels, focusing on specific themes to further inform the report's recommendations. In March 2017, the second meeting and consultation held by HLP discussed the road map ahead with the main theme being **Leave No One Behind**.⁷³ It identified seven drivers of Economic Empowerment of Women.

The HLP is supported by an independent Secretariat, hosted by UN Women, made possible through the financial support of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development.⁷⁴

How will the High-Level Panel contribute to the implementation of the SDGs?

The Panel will identify best practices in overcoming constraints to women's economic empowerment and advocate investment in tackling these issues to foster decent work, entrepreneurship, and equal access to resources, services, education, information, communications technology, energy, infrastructure, and productive assets.⁷⁵

As women's economic empowerment is pertinent to almost all of the 17 SDGs, recommendations from the Panel will purposefully guide accelerated progress on multiple targets in the framework, such as equal access to economic resources and basic services; ownership and control over land and other property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services; redistribution of unpaid care work; more and better jobs; and protection and promotion of labour rights, amongst others.⁷⁶

What is the focus of the Panel's work?

⁷¹ *ibid*

⁷² <https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/who-we-are/initiatives/sg-high-level-panel-on-womens-economic-empowerment#thepanel>

PRESS RELEASE: FIRST REPORT BY HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OUTLINES DRIVERS TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY-"Press Release: First Report By High-Level Panel On Women'S Economic Empowerment Outlines Drivers To Advance Gender Equality". *UN Women*. N.p., 2017. Web. 21 Apr. 2017.

⁷³ *Ibid*

⁷⁴ *ibid*

⁷⁵ *ibid*

⁷⁶ *ibid*



After reviewing a wide range of topics at its March meeting, Panel members endorsed a focus on six major issue areas:

1. Eliminating legal barriers to female economic empowerment
2. Addressing the care economy
3. Reducing gender pay gaps
4. Expanding opportunities for women who work informally
5. Promoting financial and digital inclusion for women
6. Fostering female entrepreneurship and enhancing the productivity of women-owned enterprises⁷⁷

In each of the six major issue areas that Panel members have agreed upon, the Report will underscore the role of social norms and attitudes that impede women’s economic empowerment, even in the presence of supportive economic policies and business practices. The Report will emphasize the two-way relationships between gender equality in society — in societal norms and in such areas as legal protections and security against violence — and economic gender equality. The macroeconomic gains and implications will be appropriately highlighted, including the gains from investments in the care economy.⁷⁸

This High Level Panel is expected to focus on women in the changing face of work. Delegates are encouraged to discuss ending violence against women and girls with disabilities; promoting women and girls’ access to Education, Training, Science and Technology; equal pay for women; and implementing economic and social policies for women’s economic empowerment.

Political Groups

African States: Poverty rates across the majority of African states remain high.⁷⁹ The majority of Africa’s women “work in insecure, poorly paid jobs, with few opportunities for advancement”.⁸⁰ Although the number of democratic elections on the continent are increasing and a record number of women have competed for seats in government, electoral-related violence is now on the rise.⁸¹

Latin America & the Caribbean: There are high levels of income inequality and social exclusion in this region, particularly among women, indigenous peoples, and youth.⁸² Moreover, “public security is a growing concern”; new forms of violence are emerging in the region and femicide has become increasingly prevalent.⁸³

⁷⁷ *ibid*

⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹ “Africa States,” UN Women, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/africanstates>

⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁸¹ *ibid*

⁸² “Latin America & the Caribbean,” UN Women, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/latinamerica-caribbeanstates>

⁸³ *ibid*



Arab States & North Africa: Since achieving their independence, Arab and North African countries have faced many difficulties, which have slowed down political, economic, and social development in these countries.⁸⁴ Arab women view gender equality as “part of an agenda comprising functioning democracies and meaningful citizenship; equitable development; equality under the law; the closing of deficits in freedom; and the redressing of gender-based human rights concerns, such as violence against women”.⁸⁵

Asia & the Pacific: Although Asia and the Pacific contain some of the world’s strongest economies, this region is also riddled with billions of the world’s poorest people.⁸⁶ It faces stark socioeconomic disparities, many of which are tied to gender. Although many countries in the region have formally committed to prioritizing gender equality, the implementation of this resolution has been hindered by a number of factors, “from limited resources to inconsistencies in upholding laws to upheaval from natural disasters”.⁸⁷ Women have played a critical role in Asia’s economic boom, making up half of all Asian business owners.⁸⁸ However, female unemployment rates in Asia are twice as high as those of males; as a result, many women are forced to be migrant workers and accept jobs with low pay and no protections, particularly in the sectors of care and domestic work.⁸⁹

Europe & Central Asia: In regard to work on gender equality, this region is very diverse; EU countries largely provide a framework for UN Women’s work on gender equality.⁹¹ In contrast, poverty is more prevalent the developing regions of Central and Southeastern Europe and Central Asia.⁹⁰ As a result, “gender inequalities persist in pay gaps and the low participation of women in decision-making bodies. Rates of intimate partner and other forms of gender-based violence remain high”.⁹¹

Recent developments and actions taken on gender equality and women’s empowerment

Recently, the international community has continued to discuss gender in the workplace in preparation for the priority theme of the CSW’s 61st session in March 2017, “Women’s Economic Empowerment in a Changing World of Work”.⁹² The Commission has planned a

⁸⁴ “Arab States/North Africa,” UN Women, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/arab-states-north-africa>

⁸⁵ *ibid*

⁸⁶ “Asia and the Pacific,” UN Women, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/asia-and-the-pacific>

⁸⁷ *ibid*

⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁸⁹ *ibid*

⁹⁰ Europe and Central Asia,” UN Women, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/europe-and-central-asia>

⁹¹ *ibid*

⁹² UN CSW, *CSW61 Organisation of Work*, p. 1.



series of roundtable discussions for CSW61 on topics such as wage gaps, the use of technology to empower women, support for women in the informal economy, and ensuring that SDG 8's targets for economic growth and decent work for all apply to both men and women.⁹³ Ahead of CSW61, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) hosted a key stakeholders' meeting on these roundtable topics on 30 January 2017.⁹⁴ Opening the meeting, the Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women, Lakshmi Puri highlighted the importance of ensuring that “young women and girls are supported and the value chain from education to skills and capacity development” and the opportunity for CSW to make “concrete, practical and action-oriented recommendations” that cover topics from structural barriers to gender discrimination in the workplace.⁹⁵ The four expert panel discussions focused on various themes, including the legal framework of the issue and how women can be included in the changing world of work in the informal sector and technological advancements.

In November 2016, in partnership with the UN-Women's Empower Women initiative, an online advocacy platform dedicated to help women achieve their economic potential, the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment released a report that emphasizes the benefits of inclusion and empowerment of women in the workforce for both the overall economy and individual businesses.⁹⁶ The report also offers policy recommendations for businesses, such as internal women's mentorship and training opportunities to promote women's empowerment in all parts of the business chain, thus recognizing women as valuable employees, innovators, distributors, business leaders, and consumers.⁹⁷ Relatedly, UN-Women, in partnership with Georgia, produced a training manual on gender equality and women's empowerment for businesses, on topics such as gender stereotypes, discrimination, health, and violence.⁹⁸

UN-Women and Eastern Africa's Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) hosted the 2016 Regional Sharefair on Gender and Resilience in November in Nairobi, Kenya. This event brought together local and regional partners to discuss ways to empower women to rebuild post-conflict and underdeveloped areas in order to make communities more economically sustainable.⁹⁹ In preparation for the Sharefair, UN-Women and IGAD compiled program innovations from women across East Africa, such as the Buy from Women Platform in Rwanda, wherein UN-Women and the World Food Programme (WFP) help provide quality agricultural supplies to women and connect small-scale women farmers to larger agricultural

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ UN CSW, *Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work: Concept Note and Discussion Guide*, 2017, pp. 1-4.

⁹⁵ UN-Women, *Speech: "Your leadership and commitment are critical to ensuring a successful outcome of CSW61"* – Lakshmi Puri, 2017.

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Tyson et al., *Business Culture and Practice as a Driver for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Summary of the Findings and Recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment*, 2016, pp. 1-12.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁹⁹ Dadalauri, *Equality Means Business: Training Manual for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Private Sector*, 2016, pp. 1-55.



supply chains via an online forum.¹⁰³ Such work helps promote women's equality in areas where traditional gender norms still permeate the agricultural sector.¹⁰⁰

In December 2016, UN-Women's Empower Women team welcomed 170 men and women to their Champions for Change program.¹⁰¹ The Champions for Change will help facilitate online skills development courses for women on topics such as the care economy and financial literacy, and they will also continue to promote social media campaigns including #BreakTheGlass and #HERstory.

Also in December 2016, the multinational company Coca-Cola published a midterm progress report on its 5by20 initiative: the company's goal is to empower 5 million women in its own business chain by 2020 as one of three sustainability priorities.¹⁰² 5by20 partners with local organizations as well as international ones, including UN-Women, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), in order to develop shared gender inclusion values and business practices that reflect those values.¹⁰³ The latest report highlights that as of 2015, 5by20 has provided skills training and resources for 1.2 million women entrepreneurs in 60 states, and their work thus far primarily impacts agriculture and retail sectors.¹⁰⁴

As markets continue to develop and become increasingly interdependent across the world, the nature of work in public, private, and informal sectors of the economy will continue to change. In light of the SDGs and recent session 61 of CSW, other UN bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and businesses met to discuss means to measure and evaluate the current state of gender equality and women's economic empowerment.¹⁰⁵ Numerous recent reports, campaigns, and business initiatives demonstrate the willingness of the international community to work towards greater women's economic empowerment as a human right and a sustainable business practice.¹⁰⁶

However, still Gender based violence, equal pay, paid maternity leave, violence against girls and women with disabilities and many other issues remain areas of concern. Violence against women in the work place takes place in all countries throughout the world and takes many forms, including sexual harassment and bullying. Violence at work comes at a cost to the organization in the form of absenteeism, increased staff turnover and reduced productivity.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Empower Women, *Sharefair 2016*, 2016, 103. Ibid, 104. UN-Women et al., *Catalogue of Innovations and Good Practices on Gender and Resilience*, 2016, pp. 14-15, 105. Waltz, *The Women Who Feed Us: Gender Empowerment (or Lack Thereof) in Rural Southern Brazil*, 2016, pp. 34-35.

¹⁰¹ Empower Women, *Empower Women Announces the 2016-2017 Champions for Change*, 2016. 107. Greene & Perkins, *Coca-Cola 5by20: Unleashing the Power of Women Entrepreneurs*, 2016, pp. 1-52.; UN-Women, et al., *Catalogue of Innovations and Good Practices on Gender and Resilience*, 2016, pp. 1-65.

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ ibid

¹⁰⁴ Greene & Perkins, *Coca-Cola 5by20: Unleashing the Power of Women Entrepreneurs*, 2016, pp. 1-52.; UN-Women, et al., *Catalogue of Innovations and Good Practices on Gender and Resilience*, 2016, pp. 1-65,

¹⁰⁵ ibid

¹⁰⁶ ibid

¹⁰⁷ TAKE ACTION SAY NO UNITE "Take Action Say NO Unite". *UN Women*. N.p., 2017. Web. 21 Apr. 2017.



The #Heforshe campaign launched by UN Women to end gender inequality, is the first of its kind aiming to galvanize as many boys and men as possible, to be advocates for gender equality.¹⁰⁸ UN Organizations have emphasized that men and boys have a real ability and responsibility to encourage furthering gender equality throughout the world, and addressing how they can do so directly impacts gender equality in all aspects of cultural, social, economic and political life.¹⁰⁹

Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it up for Gender Equality was launched as a theme for International Women's Day 2017.¹¹⁰ The world we all want is one with inclusive political institutions which guarantees equal opportunities and human rights, with an engaged citizenry involved in co-designing their own futures.¹¹¹ This is the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—a vision where no one is left behind, a vision of equality, where there is responsive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.¹¹²

While we have made progress, women remain largely outside of public decision-making, through which resources are allocated.

Because participation is both a contributor and an outcome of good governance, removing the barriers that keep women locked outside of networks of influence, requires urgent action. We know that when women are involved in political and public decision-making, communities flourish, and more so when women are a critical mass. When women participate and lead in local government, as Members of Parliament, Heads of State or Government—the decisions and laws they make tend to be focused on meeting practical and strategic needs of women, their families and their communities.¹¹³

Women's voices are important not only as an expression of gender equality, but also because diverse perspectives are necessary for responsive governance. Women's political participation is about justice and sustainability. Without it, decisions necessary for a sustainable future are not reflective of the population. They are not democratic—and they are not legitimate.¹¹⁴ With decent work, equal opportunities to ownership and control of productive resources, and the enjoyment of civil liberties and rights; secure, independent and empowered women have the power to transform economies. They are also more likely to invest time, labour and resources in their children, families and communities to reduce poverty.¹¹⁵

Possible solutions

Strengthening normative and legal frameworks:

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/9/emma-watson-gender-equality-is-your-issue-too> "Building A "Planet 50-50 By 2030"". *The Huffington Post*. N.p., 2017. Web. 21 Apr. 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/3/lakshmi-puri-speech-at-transforming-society-through-political-and-economic-empowerment-of-women#sthash.dPkmowfl.dpuf>

¹¹¹ ibid

¹¹² ibid

¹¹³ ibid

¹¹⁴ ibid

¹¹⁵ ibid



Stricter implementation of existing laws and legal frameworks is imperative to achieve Gender Equality. Low wages, vulnerability in the workplace, low paid and undervalued jobs need protection from labour legislation. Stricter enforcement of laws on sexual harassment and violence against women needs implementation. Governments need to work very closely with non-governmental organizations to support women suffering at the hands of their husbands, family members, or sexual discrimination and violence at work place.¹¹⁶

Strengthening education, training and skills development:

Governments around the world need to strengthen laws and the implementation of these laws, in order to ensure girls receive basic levels of education. Gender gaps at higher levels of schooling must to be reduced. Supporting women in non-traditional jobs is crucial, not only to making long-lasting change in their lives, but also in helping break social taboos. Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment is thus critical.¹¹⁷

Addressing the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers:

The unpaid work women and girls do provide the foundation for the global economy. This fact needs to be highlighted more in the media, amongst the private sector and in communities.¹¹⁸ For equal pay for equal work worldwide, legislation, economic incentives, and pledges such as the UN Women's *Empowerment Principles*, should be adapted and replicated everywhere.¹¹⁹

Managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment:

The dialogue on girls' access to Stem-science, technology, engineering and math education and women's role in technology has not even started to be acknowledged. Can girls and women access equal resources, opportunities and rights without access to technology? Career guidance, for education systems that are making strides towards quality science education, is vital to helping girls achieve their goals.¹²⁰

Strengthening women's collective voice, leadership and decision-making:

A proven way to overcome many systemic barriers to a woman's success has been increased participation by women in local, regional and national legislation as empowered change agents. In a matter of only 10 years, the number of women holding seats in houses of national parliament in South Asia rose from 7% to 18%. But a global goal of equal representation is still a long way off, with only one woman for every four men in parliamentary houses. A woman's voice and her ability to become a leader in her community are fundamental to empowering women.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Advanced unedited version CSW61 Agreed Conclusions – 24 March 2017

Commission on the Status of Women 61st session13 - 24 March 2017 "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work" Agreed Conclusions (Advanced unedited version)

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ OVERVIEW - WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES- "Overview - Women's Empowerment Principles". *Weprinciples.org*. N.p., 2017. Web. 21 Apr. 2017.

Advanced unedited version CSW61 Agreed Conclusions – 24 March 2017-Commission on the Status of Women61st session13 - 24 March 2017"Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work" Agreed Conclusions (Advanced unedited version)

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Ibid



Strengthening the role of the private sector in women's economic empowerment:

Women entrepreneurs and their enterprises are important, as they contribute to the overall sustainable development of their communities, thereby further impacting the world economy. Hence, the private sector must support women in the world of work with greater opportunities.¹²²

Points for consideration

In researching for your position papers and preparing for our simulation, the following are a few points for consideration, and will be the focus of our discussions around the empowerment and advancement of women around the world.

1. Given that many women spend much of their time performing crucial yet unpaid, household labor, what policies will help women attain economic recognition and independence?
2. Given the direction of the economy in the future, what skills should be promoted in educational programs aimed at women, especially in the developing world?
3. How can men and boys be incorporated in gender equality efforts in countries and across different regions globally?
4. What cultural practices in particular countries prohibit gender equality, and how can men and boys be involved in breaking down such barriers?
5. What is the responsibility of all global citizens to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women? How can regional and international efforts further incorporate men and boys into successful efforts towards gender equality?
6. What are the key lessons learned - both best practices and shortcomings - from the SDGs and current implementation efforts?
7. In what ways and in which direction can we, as the High Level Summit, influence the future development agenda in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment? What are the priority areas that have failed to be addressed by the MDGs and which should be included in the High Level Panel Discussion?
8. How can civil society and private institutions contribute to achieving SDG 17?
9. What difficulties do women face regarding access to compete in markets?
10. How can the gap between gender discriminatory laws and the absence of legal protection to safeguard women, be overcome?
11. In what ways can women in countries with legal protection against gender discrimination still fight for equal pay, protection against being fired during pregnancy and paid maternity leave?
12. Considering the socio-economic dynamics of less developed countries particularly Sub-Saharan African countries and low-income economies from Asia suffering from a lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities, what is the relationship between women and water, and how is this linked to the empowerment of women?

¹²² ibid



13. The most important question to consider for all would be to think about SDG 5 and ask yourself –“If not me, who and if not now, when?”

Discussions during the Panel will be directed towards considering how we can achieve the following:

- a) Supporting the development and implementation of robust legal frameworks that promote gender equality in political and electoral processes
- b) Expanding the pool of qualified and capable women running for election;
- c) Transforming gender norms so that women leaders in the public sphere are accepted as legitimate and effective, and men’s contributions to care work is assured
- d) Supporting women leaders in gender-sensitive political institutions

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