



MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FORUM

30 JANUARY 2017

10AM - 1PM AND 3-6PM

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS

CONFERENCE BUILDING

CONFERENCE ROOM 3

Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work

CONCEPT NOTE & DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION, OBJECTIVES & FORMAT

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) will address as its priority theme 'Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work'. In addition, it will evaluate progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the fifty-eighth session (2014) on 'Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls'. The Commission will discuss as a focus area the 'Empowerment of indigenous women'.

Background

Achieving women's economic empowerment and the realization of women's rights to and at work are essential for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At its sixtieth session, the Commission on the Status of Women provided a roadmap for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At its sixty-first session, the Commission has the opportunity to take this work forward and focus in concrete and practical terms on realizing women's right to work and at work, and their full and productive employment and decent work.

The world of work is changing in significant ways, marked by innovations – especially in digital and information and communications technologies – and the increasing informality and mobility of labour. Realizing women's economic empowerment in this context requires transformative, structural change, including in regards to trade and financial globalization, so that processes that are altering the world of work will come as a benefit to women everywhere. It requires macroeconomic and labour market policies that create decent jobs, protect worker rights, and generate living wages, including for informal and migrant women workers. It requires enhanced interventions to tackle persistent gender inequalities and gaps in the world of work, and stepped-up attention to technological and digital changes to ensure they become vehicles for women's economic empowerment.

Growing and emerging areas, such as the care and green economies and climate change mitigation and adaptation, also offer new opportunities for decent work for women.

Women's economic empowerment requires political will and partnerships to develop and implement policies that integrate gender equality perspectives in labour institutions and programmes at local, national and global levels; provide women workers with social protection and income security; and recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, so that women may enjoy economic opportunities and outcomes on an equal footing to men. Significantly increased financing from all sources is required for the full and accelerated implementation of new and existing commitments to empower women economically.

The Commission is expected to adopt agreed conclusions on the priority theme that should identify gaps and challenges and address action-oriented recommendations to States, relevant intergovernmental bodies, mechanisms and entities of the United Nations system and other stakeholders, in order to accelerate implementation and strengthen political commitment and momentum to this key issue of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Stakeholders at different levels are already preparing for CSW61, and momentum is building towards an interactive and results-oriented session at national and regional level. At global level, efforts are under way to build alliances, strengthen networks and expand multi-stakeholder approaches to help accelerate the implementation of the existing normative framework and to deepen and strengthen it for greater effectiveness and impact.

OBJECTIVES

The Multi-Stakeholder Forum will serve to engage a range of stakeholders in the preparations for the priority theme of the sixty-first session of the Commission. More specifically, the Forum will:

- Raise awareness of existing commitments, and identify key areas and issues that should be considered by CSW61 in the context of its priority theme, and ways for addressing those
- Create a platform for sharing approaches and strategies that bring results, and for highlighting areas that require enhanced consensus
- Foster dialogue, build alliances and galvanize partnerships for action in support of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their human rights and for accelerating implementation of the expected outcomes of CSW61.

FORMAT

The Multi-Stakeholder Forum will consist of an opening session, four interactive panel discussions where participants will engage in dialogue, highlight key areas for implementation and commit to further action, and a closing session. The themes of the panel discussions are aligned with major areas and issues raised in the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme (E/CN.6/2017/3, forthcoming):

- Strengthening normative and legal frameworks for full employment and decent work for all women
- Strengthening women's leadership and participation in the changing world of work
- Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment
- Expanding opportunities for women in the changing world of work (i.e. the growing informality of work, technological change and mobility)

The discussions will take place in an interactive format guided by moderators. Five to six panelists per panel will be invited to address key questions outlined below. Their interventions will be limited to five minutes each, followed by comments from discussants and participants. Each

panelist will also be encouraged to present one concrete result/outcome for CSW61 and her/his contribution and/or commitment towards achieving that outcome.

PARTICIPANTS

Participation by different stakeholders, and in particular Permanent and Deputy Permanent Representatives and experts from Permanent Missions to the United Nations, civil society representatives and other stakeholders including the private sector and academia, will facilitate the sharing of a range of perspectives. Government representatives from Capital will be invited to contribute, including via short messages.

OUTCOME

A report on the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, summarizing the key elements from the discussions and outcome expectations will be prepared and published on the web, and contribute to the preparations for CSW61. It will also help galvanize stakeholders towards effective implementation of the outcomes of CSW61.

DISCUSSION NOTE FOR PANEL 1

Strengthening normative and legal frameworks for full employment and decent work for all women

While the world of work is changing, structural barriers to gender equality and gender-based discrimination persist within and across countries, and are evident as gender gaps in labour force participation and pay, occupational segregation, unequal working conditions and women's burden of unpaid domestic and care work that characterize both the formal and informal economies. These gender gaps are rooted in historically unequal power relations between women and men in the household and in the economy more broadly; gender-biased impacts of macroeconomic fiscal, monetary, and trade policies; discriminatory laws and social norms; and greater constraints on women in balancing work and family responsibilities. Violence against women in the world of work increases gender inequalities and signifies high costs to women in lost earnings and wellbeing. Urgent policy action is required to address structural barriers and discrimination to strengthen opportunities and outcomes for women in the changing world of work.

Women are systematically paid less than men for work of equal value across all regions, countries and sectors. The global gender pay gap is 23 percent and is a major cause of an overall lifetime income inequality between men and women. The gender pay gap reflects differential treatment in the labour market due to discrimination, occupational segregation, and greater constraints on women in balancing paid work

and family responsibilities, none of which can be addressed through education alone. Laws and regulations that uphold the principle of equal pay for work of equal value must be implemented and enforced in compliance with international labour standards.

Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work requires equal employment opportunities in the private and public sectors and improved terms and conditions of their paid and unpaid work. Access to decent, good-quality paid work is the most important factor in economic empowerment, and the basis for women's greater agency and economic independence. The promotion and protection of rights to and at work is critical for the realization of women's economic empowerment and gender equality.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What legislative and policy actions are necessary and effective in addressing structural barriers to women's economic empowerment and eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence in the world of work?
- What measures are governments taking to reduce and eliminate gender inequalities and gaps in the world of work, and what roles do workers' and employers' organizations have to help in effectively implementing relevant laws and policies?
- How are countries integrating these efforts into their national strategies and policies for implementing the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goals 1, 5, 8 and 10? How are national mechanisms for gender equality supporting these efforts?

DISCUSSION NOTE FOR PANEL 2

[Strengthening women's leadership and participation in the changing world of work](#)

Women's leadership and participation is essential for shaping the changing world of work to achieve gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Women organizing in workplaces and communities is indispensable for upholding labour rights, ensuring decent work and defining policy priorities. Women's participation in worker organizations, cooperatives, trade unions and self-help groups has benefitted women workers. Through collective bargaining, women workers can negotiate to reduce gender pay gaps, increase pay and benefits, and improve working conditions. Women's equal representation in leadership and decision-making positions at work, including on corporate boards, needs to be supported and achieved.

Women's enterprises can be important vehicles for economic empowerment, leading to improved incomes and contributing to poverty reduction in the household and community. Yet women's entrepreneurship, as well as their access to markets and resources, is inhibited by discriminatory social norms, laws and policies. Policies and actions are needed from both the public and private sector to support women-owned enterprises and female cooperatives.

Better governance at international, regional and national levels is critical for women's economic empowerment. Tripartite arrangements at institutional and governmental levels can be a means for ensuring that governments, employers, and organized workers participate in promoting and protecting the human and labour rights of all women workers to access decent work and social protection.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What policies and other measures taken by governments and other relevant stakeholders have proven effective in expanding opportunities for women in economic leadership and decision-making positions in both the public and private sector, and in work- and labour-related institutions?
- What actions are governments taking to expand opportunities for women workers and their organizations to contribute to shaping economic policies and regulations that affect gender equality in the world of work?
- How are national mechanisms for gender equality, as well as women's organizations, prioritizing women's increased participation, leadership and decision-making in the changing world of work?

DISCUSSION NOTE FOR PANEL 3

[Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment](#)

Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work requires equal employment opportunities in the private and public sectors and improved terms and conditions of their paid and unpaid work and would be greatly accelerated by access to social protection. Women are over-represented among the 73 per cent of the world's population that has only partial or no access to social protection. Well-designed social protection schemes can narrow gender gaps in poverty rates, enhance women's access to personal income and provide a life-line to families.

Strengthening social protection systems to support working, retired and unpaid women and their families is crucial to reducing poverty and inequality, supporting inclusive growth, and increasing gender equality.

Women's and girls' disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work must be recognized, reduced and redistributed. The total value of unpaid care and domestic work is estimated to be between 10 and 39 per cent of GDP, and can surpass that of manufacturing, commerce, transportation and other key sectors. Women continue to subsidize the market economy through their unpaid care and domestic work, which often fills in for lack of public expenditures on social services and infrastructure. Policies that reduce the time and effort that women and girls spend on unpaid care and domestic work by providing social protection and infrastructure can create employment, improve women's labour force participation and increase retention of girls in school.

Expanding public and private sector employment in paid jobs in the care economy can make a significant contribution to gender equality and women's economic empowerment, and should be seen as investments to narrow the gender pay gap, reduce overall inequality and redress the exclusion of women from decent jobs.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What actions are governments taking to incentivize job creation and the promotion of women's full, equal and productive employment and decent work?
- What policies and measures have proven effective in increasing women's labour force participation and reduce the poverty rates among vulnerable groups of women? How are national gender equality mechanisms and other relevant stakeholders contributing to these efforts?
- What steps are being taken to recognize, reduce and redistribute women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work? What strategies are governments using to expand public and private sector employment in paid jobs in the care economy?

DISCUSSION NOTE FOR PANEL 4

[Expanding opportunities for women in the changing world of work \(ie. the growing informality of work, technological change and mobility\)](#)

The increasing informality and mobility of labour reflect changes in the world of work brought about by globalization and interconnected global value and supply

chains, technological advances, the shift of manufacturing to developing countries and the growth of the service sector.

The challenges women face in the formal economy are mirrored in the informal economy: occupational segregation, gender wage gaps, unequal access to resources and social protection, disproportionate burdens of unpaid care and domestic work, violence and harassment and even greater barriers to organizing and mobilizing. Women are overrepresented in the informal sector around the globe, and in developing countries the informal sector is the primary source of employment for women. A defining feature of informal employment is the lack of social protection and labour rights.

Globally, migrant women have higher labour force participation rates than non-migrant women, although they are concentrated in female-dominated care and service sectors in the informal economy. The growing numbers of migrant women workers requires particular attention and concerted social and economic policy responses to create enabling environments for improved labour force participation, entrepreneurship, wage and working conditions, social protection and tackling unpaid domestic and care work.

Technological and digital developments are transforming the world of work, creating new types of jobs and enabling new forms of work; as well as leading to the disappearance of jobs, presenting both challenges and opportunities to women's economic empowerment. As the future of work is being shaped, the potential effects of technological and digital change on jobs and the nature of work needs to be anticipated so as to ensure that women will be equally equipped with the education, training, and vocational and entrepreneurial skills to achieve equal outcomes.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What government actions have proven effective in making women's informal employment more economically viable and promoting the transition to formal employment?
- What strategies are governments and other relevant stakeholders implementing to ensure that technological change contributes to women's economic empowerment, and that women can take full advantage of new economic opportunities?
- What policies and actions have proven to be effective in promoting safe and secure working environments for women in the informal economy and for migrant workers?

