

SUMMARY

HLPF 2017 Side Event: Accelerating Women's Economic Empowerment to Achieve to the 2030 Agenda [[UN Women news piece on the event](#)]

Organized by United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, the Group of Champions for Women's Economic Empowerment, and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

Monday 17 July 2017, 1:15 – 2:30pm, Trusteeship Council Chamber, UN HQ

The purpose of the event was to bring together thought leaders and partners of the global call to empower women and provide a platform for interactive and substantive dialogues to inspire and catalyze a partnership for impact, building on the outputs and recommendations of the UNSG's High-Level Panel (HLP) on Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and the agreed conclusions of the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2017 (CSW 61).

The specific objectives of the side event were:

- ❖ To promote the outputs and recommendations of the HLP and the CSW 61 agreed conclusions;
- ❖ To solicit commitments and/or declarations towards implementing the recommendations of the HLP and agreed conclusions of the CSW within the context of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and
- ❖ To highlight the linkages between women's economic empowerment and the achievement of the SDGs and how tools such as ICT can play an important role.

Opening Remarks and Moderation – Purna Sen, Director, Policy Division, UN Women, and Deputy Member, United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment

- Thanked the participants and highlighted the support of the UN Secretary General to the HLP
- Pointed to the linkages across SDGs (3, 4, 5 and 8) when it comes to women's economic empowerment.
- Why economic empowerment is important for SDG implementation: Only 50% of women of working age is part of the labour force, while 77% of men. The gap widens even more for women of minority groups, immigrant women and mothers, including in terms of unequal pay.
- Women are more likely than men to work in informal employment. In South Asia 80% of women work in informal employment and in Sub Saharan Africa 74%.
- Women do 2 ½ times more unpaid care work than men.

[Film on the work and process of the UNSG's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment](#)

Panel 1

Panel 1 with representatives of the HLP members - Costa Rica, UK, ILO and UN Women as well as representatives from core constituencies promoting and influencing women's rights, namely women's rights organizations and the private sector.

Olga Sánchez, Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy, Costa Rica

Q: In the lead as co-Chair of the HLP, we have been deeply inspired by the vision and work of the government of Costa Rica. Could you please share how HLP recommendations are feeding into SDG implementation at national level?

- Women often belong to vulnerable sectors and are a high priority for Costa Rica. President Solis, who has been co-chairing the HLP invites other leaders to join the journey on women's economic empowerment and make it a reality.
- Women in the economy can strengthen the autonomy, capacity building, public policies and access to productive resources. Education is crucial to reach this goal, especially STEM.
- Unpaid care need to be a social responsibility. Financing, capacity building, and workable laws need to be aligned as well. We need to find better sustainable resources for health programmes incl. sexual and reproductive health to fight teenage pregnancy. Institutions need to collaborate across sectors.

Professor Dame Sally Davies, Chef Medical Officer, United Kingdom

Q: As a member of the High-Level Panel, the government of the United Kingdom made some strong commitments to advancing women's economic empowerment - from your vantage point as Chief Medical Officer for the United Kingdom how do you see the connections between achievement of SDG 5 on achieving Gender Equality and SDG 3 on ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all, and advancing women's economic empowerment?

- Health, incl. maternal and women's economic empowerment are the foundation for gender equality so we need to deliver on SDG3.
- Two things are needed - opportunities and aspiration. Girls and women need to aspire to lead and the glass ceiling must be removed. Role models are important; and men must be actively involved.
- DFID is going forward on women's economic empowerment by helping women to work, securing access to the labor market and removing gender barriers such as through the Work and Opportunities for Women initiative (WOW) informed by evidence based research & data.

Christophe Perrin, Deputy Director General, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Issues and concerns of women at work, particularly in informal employment, have received attention, thanks to ILO's leadership in the High-Level Panel as well as at this year's Commission on the Status on Women with the theme "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work". What has this meant for ILO's own work?

- Without partnerships and alliances, we cannot face the challenges ahead regarding WEE. ILO has established two initiatives – Women at Work and The Future of Work informed by the HLP findings. ILO will also be a partner in CSW62 on rural women.
- Another major initiative is on Equal Pay – Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC with UN Women, ILO and OECD).



UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

- The High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth, with ILO as co-vice chair, aims to create 40 million new jobs in the health sector by 2040 and women would represent the major part of job takers in this sector.
- Also, the Domestic Workers Convention adopted in 2011 is a major instrument in favor of WEE.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under Secretary General & Executive Director, UN Women

What has been the significance of the High-Level Panel for you and for UN Women? How is UN Women taking forward the commitments made as part of the High-Level Panel process?

- We have been able to profile women's economic empowerment from the bottom up by highlighting the challenges of the women in the informal sector and the need for policy, interactions and awareness for this group. India has 100 million women in the informal sector.
- We focus on lack of affordable child care, which is one of the main reasons why women cannot enter in the formal market. We also looked at the working poor – unprotected, no minimal wage, lack of equal pay for work of equal value. Our partnership with ILO on these issues is crucial.
- Women must have access to ICT and the digital economy so they can leverage future opportunities in this sector.
- UN Women is also looking into discriminatory practices and stereotypes in the work place through the Unstereotype Alliance with key private sector partners.

John Danilovich, Secretary General, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

Special remarks:

- Women's economic empowerment is the cornerstone for achieving SDGs – could be renamed the Business Development Goals (BDG's) because the implementation of the SDGs has a clear economic imperative of stronger economic growth for everyone, including women.
- The private sector has a vital role to play in WEE, with training and support to entrepreneurship and STEM. Women need to be equipped with the right tools – for this ICTs are essential and bridging the gender divide is a key priority. Partnerships are essential to achieve these recommendations.
- Global internet use has increased significantly over the past 10 years but it is a matter of concern that the global internet user gender gap also grew from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016.
- Of the HLP's seven drivers of transformation, at least two of them are impossible to achieve without private sector leadership and support – Driver 4 on digital and financial inclusion, as well as Driver 5 on changing business practices.

Wardarina, The Women's Major Group and Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

- The key message is: Nothing about women without women.
- We must dance to a beat of a new song to achieve WEE and to enable women to exercise political, social and economic aspects of their lives. How can we achieve women's economic empowerment when only 8 men hold the same wealth as the 50% poorest of the world?

- How can women be economically empowered when women who call for increased wages are being targeted and silenced? We must address human rights abuses, structural barriers, unjust economic policies, racism, colonialism, militarism, patriarchy and fundamentalism.

Panel 2

Panel 2 represented the HLP partners with updates on their concrete action plans, commitments and progress relating to women's economic empowerment.

Laila Bokhari, Deputy Foreign Minister, Norway

Redressing gender disparities is about smart economics and increasing productivity. Investing in WEE pays off. Women in Norway are participating on almost equal footing as men in the labour market because of affordable care system. Education and innovation are crucial for WEE. We must encourage positive role models for both men and women. No country can fail to ignore ½ of its population.

Doreen Bogdan, Chief, Strategic Planning and Membership, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

ITU's core mission is to connect the world. How can we connect the worlds when half the population do not have access to the internet? Each time we bring women and girls online we accelerate the steps to achieve the SDGs. But connectivity is not enough – we need to empower women to use these skills to be creators of opportunities, jobs, entrepreneurs. Digital footprints can only be effective when it is affordable and accessible. Through our EQUALS partnership with UN Women, we show that women and girls are equal participants in today's digital technical revolution. We need to eliminate violence against women and create safe working environment and use if ICTs, promote and support women enterprises.

Busaya Mathelin, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand

We must close all gender gaps. Fewer women than men are present in the labour market in ASEAN countries today. To overcome this challenge, ASEAN works with the World Bank and UN Women to push forward the agenda through reducing the education and skills gap; promoting entrepreneurship; supporting women's economic participation and reducing unpaid care. Building a vibrant and sustainable ASEAN community and achieving the SDGs go hand in hand.

Rosa Pavanelli, Secretary General, Public Services International

More than two thirds of the 20 million workers that PSI represent are women. We work for universal education, health and social protection in a fair labour market. The broken tax system effects women more than men and we see that in a female dominated sector, wages are dropping. We therefore need to create jobs with coherent social protection policies.

Gillian Bird, Permanent Representative, Australia

We must have gender equality, incl. women's economic empowerment, to achieve the SDGs. Australia promotes financial inclusion, fosters private sector support for gender equality, promotes women led business, ensures legislative reforms to eliminate discrimination. We work on this at home as well as in the region through our development aid partnerships in South East Asia. We just launched a new national strategy, Towards 2025: Boosting Australian Women's Workforce Participation.