

HLPF. SDG 5 and interlinkages with other SDGs - **Gender equality**. Thursday 7 July,  
9:00am – 12:00pm  
Talking Points

Excellencies, colleagues, and friends,

- Thank you for inviting me to be part of this important discussion.
- Clearly, the world is **not** on track to achieve gender equality by 2030.
- 16 Arab countries included in the WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2021 have a remaining average gap of over 40% yet to be closed—this is the widest gap worldwide. *The Arab region needs 179 years to close the gender gap compared to 135 globally - we are 44 years further behind!*
- This manifests in women's low participation in public life and in the economy.
- Women labor force participation in the region stands at around 21% - the lowest rate in the world - compared to 74% for men.
- And unemployment among women is increasing, reflecting that the region is not creating enough jobs to absorb even the few female entrants to the labor force.
- And because women are largely unemployed, they remain largely outside traditional social protection schemes.
- In some countries including LDCs, most working women are in the informal sector, again outside traditional social protection schemes.

Excellencies & Colleagues

Social protection systems are currently failing women.

- Women owned businesses in the region tend to remain micro or SMEs, due to greater restrictions in accessing credit. The wage and income gaps continue to persist, in our region as in better performing countries in Europe.
- In the region, as in Africa and Latin America, the burden of care continues to rest mainly on women.

COVID response measures have failed women.

- ESCWA found that a mere 1% of government support in the region was directed specifically to women and girls. Our sister regional commission ESCAP analysis shows also minimal support to women.

To end, countries must structurally reform social protection systems to ensure they are sustainable, inclusive and gender sensitive.

And it is not possible to achieve gender equality without a redistribution of power and resources. We need:

1. better representation of women in politics and decision-making;
2. employment policies that connect women to decent jobs;
3. strong care infrastructure so that women do not have to shoulder all unpaid care obligations;
4. change in social and cultural norms that detract women from seeking work;
5. And we urgently need to continue the fight against gender-based violence at the national, regional, and global level.

Thank you.