



15
UNIDO
GENERAL
CONFERENCE

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*15th session of UNIDO's General Conference
Interregional Debate 6*

"Empowering Women: Fostering Entrepreneurship" 4 December 2013



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

UNIDO **GENDER** 
UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION



PROGRAMME

INTERREGIONAL DEBATE 6

EMPOWERING WOMEN: FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

At the center of inclusive and sustainable industrial development is the urgent need to harness the economic potential of women – half the world’s population. Entrepreneurship has been recognized as an effective means for women to generate income, to create sustainable livelihoods, and to be empowered as key economic actors and driving forces of growth. However, women often face particular barriers that influence their capacity, and at times, willingness to enter markets and engage in new businesses. As a result, women remain economically marginalized and economies lose out on the benefits that otherwise would be provided by more jobs, new products and services, and additional revenue. These gender gaps impose real costs to society and further stress the need to empower women and harness their economic potential through fostering entrepreneurship.

In this context, the debate will serve to gain a better understanding of the important role of women in inclusive and sustainable industrial development, the current challenges that need to be addressed, and potential ways forward. The debate will bring together a dynamic panel of gender experts and practitioners as well as women entrepreneurial leaders who will address the following questions:

- » What are the existing barriers to women’s entrepreneurship? How can we overcome these?
- » What conditions are needed for women entrepreneurs to succeed?
- » What policies and partnerships can be successful in promoting women’s economic empowerment?
- » What best practices or lessons learned can we take forward in the post 2015 development agenda?

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

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| 16:30 | Women’s entrepreneurship video and welcome remarks Ms. Nilgun Tas , Chair of the UNIDO Gender Mainstreaming Steering Committee (GMSC) |
| 16:40 | Opening statement from the moderator Mr. Martin Sajdik , Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Republic of Austria to the United Nations in New York |
| 16:45 | Panel discussion Mr. Gerard Finnegan , Former Director, International Labour Organization Ms. Vidyani Hettigoda , Director, Siddhalepa Group of Companies, Sri Lanka Ms. Eva Muraya , CEO of Brand Strategy and Design, (EA) Limited, Kenya Ms. Shahina Waheed , Women’s entrepreneurship specialist and UNIDO National Programme Officer, Pakistan Ms. Dessima Williams , Former Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations and Director of the Grenada Education and Development Programme (GRENED) |
| 17:35 | Open discussion (Q&A) |
| 17:55 | Concluding remarks by moderator |
| 18:00 | Close of interregional debate 6 |

GENERAL CONFERENCE

INTERREGIONAL DEBATE 6

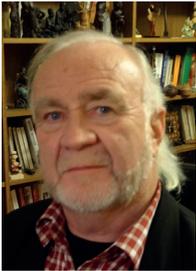
EMPOWERING WOMEN: FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Martin Sajdik (Moderator)

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Austria to the United Nations in New York

Previously, Ambassador Sajdik served as Austria's ambassador to the People's Republic of China, Mongolia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. He also served as Director General for Economic Affairs and European Integration. In addition, he held executive positions at a major Austrian construction company and an Austrian Bank in Moscow. Earlier in his career, he served at the Permanent Representation of Austria to the United Nations Office at Geneva. Ambassador Sajdik studied law, international law and international relations in Vienna, Moscow and Bologna, and received his doctorate degree in law in Vienna in 1971.



Gerard Finnegan

Former Director, International Labour Organization

With a career spanning 22 years with the International Labour Organization, Finnegan has worked in Africa, Asia, South America and the ILO headquarters in Geneva. During his time with the ILO, he created and managed their programme on "Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality" (WEDGE), now operational in more than 30 countries. Since retirement in 2010, Finnegan has carried out a number of assignments for the World Bank, African Development Bank, Commonwealth Secretariat and the ILO. He has written extensively on women's entrepreneurship development, small enterprise development, marketing and cooperatives.



Vidyani Hettigoda

Director, Siddhalepa Group of Companies

Since 1996, Hettigoda has been working at Siddhalepa Group where she now serves as Director. She also serves as a Director of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry Sri Lanka and is a member of numerous national and regional business councils, including executive committee member of the SAARC Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs Council, committee member of the Confederation of Asia Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and past president of the Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Hettigoda also received the French award of Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite (Knight of the Order of Merit) for her work towards empowering women.



Eva Muraya

CEO, Brand Strategy and Design (EA) Limited

Muraya has over 20 years of brand development experience having managed regional brand building programs for FedEx, Block Hotels, Xerox, Vital Voices Global Partnership amongst others. In 2002, she established her own merchandise branding company, Color Creations Limited. She has received global recognition for her entrepreneurial success including as co-recipient of Goldman Sachs Fortune Global Leadership Award and award nominee for the Pan African Invent and Innovate Conference in Accra. Muraya serves on several boards including the Kenya Association of Women Business Owners, Nairobi Women's Hospital, and USIU's Chandaria School of Business.



Shahina Waheed

National Programme Officer, UNIDO

Waheed is an expert on developing modern analytical and benchmarking methods for creative sub-sectors of the formal industrial sectors of the economy. She has been working for more than 20 years in the areas of promoting women's labour force participation and gender sensitive enterprise development in innovative, non-traditional and creative sectors of the economy. Currently, she is heading a programme on "Women Entrepreneurship Development" focusing on empowering 10,000 women beneficiaries with UNIDO in Pakistan, pioneering the application of heritage, culture and local knowledge in developing successful enterprises. Waheed holds a doctoral degree in Development Economics from the University of Goettingen in Germany.



Dessima Williams

Director, Grenada Education and Development Programme (GREDED)

Williams manages a small family business, Rainbow Inn. She is Founder / Director of the Grenada Education and Development Programme (GREDED), a civil society organization using education as a catalyst for the empowerment of youth and rural communities. From January 2009 until June this year, Williams served as Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a group of 43 island and coastal nations. In the 1980's, she served as Grenada's ambassador to the Organization of American States and Deputy Governor to the World Bank. Prior to her appointment as UN ambassador, she was a professor of Sociology and Social Policy at Brandeis University, USA. Williams holds a doctoral degree in International Relations and a master's degree in International Development from American University.

Official summary: Interregional Debate 6 - "Empowering Women: Fostering Entrepreneurship"

An interregional debate was held on fostering women's entrepreneurship as a means of empowering women. The moderator was Mr. Martin Sajdik, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations in New York, and the panelists were: Mr. Gerard Finnegan, former Director of the Lusaka Country Office, International Labour Organization (ILO); Ms. Vidyani Hettigoda, Director, Siddhalepa Group of Companies, Sri Lanka; Ms. Eva Muraya, Chief Executive Officer, Brand Strategy and Design (EA) Limited, Kenya; Ms. Shahina Waheed, National Programme Officer, UNIDO; and Ms. Dessima Williams, former Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations in New York and Founder and Director of the Grenada Education and Development Programme.

The moderator said that economies grew when more women entered the labour market, but women remained the most underutilized asset in the world economy. Women often started their own businesses out of necessity because they were excluded from the labour market, whereas men tended to view entrepreneurship as an opportunity for innovation and growth.

Issues that needed to be addressed in order to encourage entrepreneurship among women included the exploration of innovative means of allowing women to exchange or obtain practical entrepreneurship experience, how to maintain girls' interest and confidence in subjects such as mathematics at school, and how to improve access to finance.

Ms. Muraya said that she had been introduced to entrepreneurship only as an adult, which had represented a barrier for her as she had lacked not only experience but also information about related subjects, such as technology and investments. She had also found there to be a lack of role models and had experienced difficulties in accessing affordable credit. In addition, as a wife and mother, she had been faced with various familial and social obligations not faced by men.

The following were needed to overcome the many barriers that women faced, in particular in emerging economies: the formulation of affirmative action policies to promote equity in economic engagement; improved access to education, training, market information and finance to provide a more enabling environment for female entrepreneurs; entrepreneurship training and mentoring; and strong institutions that provided access to business networks, markets, and information and communication technologies.

Ms. Hettigoda said that she had started her career as a labourer, and had learned different skills over time. She believed that that was one path an entrepreneur could take. In Sri Lanka, many women did not work after they married, but working from home was a good way of allowing them to earn an income; her company provided training on giving spa treatments from the home. It also offered flexible working hours, a crèche, medical services for children and transportation in order to assist women in remaining in employment.

The provision of training in, among other areas, information technology, food processing and services that could be offered from the home, such as hairdressing and tourism-related activities, as well as in entrepreneurship and independence, could help women to

join the labour market. Opportunities for networking with other female entrepreneurs were vital in order to give women the confidence to start their own businesses. In general, access to finance and knowledge of information technology needed to be improved. Sri Lanka needed more university facilities and more women at the decision-making level.

The empowerment of women needed to start in schools, so that girls had the confidence to become entrepreneurs in the future. It was more effective to empower small groups of women, as the benefits would spread to wider groups through community links and word of mouth.

Mr. Finnegan said that the concepts of "micro" and "small" had often been associated with female entrepreneurs, for example microfinancing, but there was no reason to apply those restrictive words specifically to women. Projects to empower women needed to take into account family responsibilities, otherwise women could be forced out of business.

During his time working for ILO, he had initiated the Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE) programme, which was aimed at developing the knowledge base of women entrepreneurs through, for example, the collection of sex-disaggregated data and information on good practices and successes around the world, and at developing partnerships both internally, such as between ministries, and externally, such as between international organizations, international and regional financial institutions, the private sector and Governments. The UNIDO General Conference was a good example of partnerships at work.

Ms. Waheed said that girls and boys were raised differently in order to fulfil the different roles expected of them by society. That was a major social and cultural barrier to women's becoming involved in business, which had traditionally been considered a male domain. However, once women realized that they did not have to conform to those expectations and learned such life skills as confidence, time management and the power to negotiate, they could overcome such barriers and become successful entrepreneurs.

Synergies between the private and public sectors, such as between organizations and institutions and between universities and industry, should be facilitated to further understanding of the particular needs of women so that appropriate programmes and services could be set up to help them become successful in business.

The creative industries represented the key to inclusive industrial development and those industries were well suited to women. The creation of a new job market in those industries would mean that women were not competing with or taking jobs from men. Advancing those industries should be part of the post-2015 agenda.

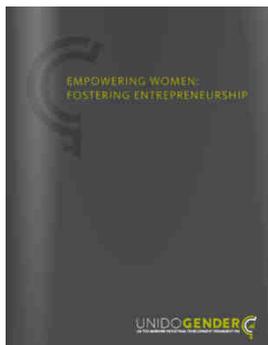
Ms. Williams proposed various solutions to the barriers faced by female entrepreneurs, including the expansion of women's access to economic decision-making through increased female representation at the policymaking level, involving more men in the gender equality debate and providing female entrepreneurs with access to capacity-building and new technologies, for example through intergenerational partnerships, to allow them to streamline their production methods and increase output.

In response to questions and comments from members of the audience, the panelists referred to the changing role of the entities of the United Nations system in promoting women's empowerment and how the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the

Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) could take the lead in bringing different agencies together; the empowerment and education of women as means of allowing men and women to work together as partners and break the pattern of each gender fulfilling traditional and unequal roles; the importance of education in enabling women to enter traditionally male-dominated sectors such as engineering; and the need for female entrepreneurs to become involved in mentoring and coaching.

Ms. Muraya outlined some of the steps that a small enterprise needed to take in order to expand: build a compelling brand; have a clear value proposition with regard to its products or services; examine the technical skills of the workforce and improve them if required; and draw up a bankable business plan to secure bank credit or attract investors.

The moderator summed up by saying that gender inequality was driven by multiple factors but equality could be achieved if the right environment was created. Progress was being made in that regard. The entities of the United Nations system should coordinate and collaborate on the gender-related issues that formed part of their mandates within the framework of the post-2015 development agenda. He asked members of the audience and panelists to continue the discussion and to consider the role of UNIDO in fostering gender equality in industry.



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