

Director General's statement on International Women's Day

VIENNA, 5 March 2015 – The Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Li Yong, issued the following statement, "Advancing gender equality, empowerment of women and girls for a transformative post-2015 development agenda", on the occasion of International Women's Day celebrated on 8 March.

"Empowering women is empowering humanity. Gender equality and women's empowerment is central to UNIDO's work as it is not only a matter of human rights, but also a precondition for sustainable development and economic growth, which are drivers of poverty reduction and social integration. When women and men are more equal, economies grow faster, more people are lifted out of poverty and the overall well-being of societies is enhanced. Central to UNIDO's mission of inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID) is the urgent need to harness the economic potential of women – half of the world's population. Women are powerful drivers of ISID and their role is poised to become even greater in the future."

"However, women and girls still make up 70 per cent of the world's extreme poor. The majority lives in rural areas, where communities are resource-poor and isolated, and most subsist on small-scale productive activities. UNIDO helps develop competitive agro-industries in order to create jobs and sustainable livelihoods for the rural poor. By providing technical assistance, UNIDO aims to strengthen agro-industrial capabilities and linkages to facilitate economic transformation in rural communities, particularly among women and youth. For example, UNIDO provides rural women and men equal access to new agro-technologies and skills upgrading. Assistance is also provided for process optimization, compliance with quality and environmental standards, and the identification of market opportunities."

"In addition, to maximize entrepreneurial and economic opportunities for rural women, UNIDO targets sectors with a high potential for wealth creation, food security or export promotion. In countries such as Bolivia, China, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, and Tunisia, UNIDO is building entrepreneurial capacities and upgrading the skills and knowledge of both women and men in rural and urban communities to enable them to engage in productive activities, as well as in services that are critical to inclusive and sustainable industrial development."

"Investing in girls' and boys' education is a way to initiate transformative change in society and UNIDO is leading youth entrepreneurship education programmes in Angola, Armenia, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Iraq, Mozambique, Rwanda and the countries of the Manu River Union. At the same time, we provide women and men equal access to vocational training and skills upgrading opportunities in renewable energy technologies,

national quality institutions and new technologies in food processing that strengthen their qualifications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines and, at the same time, challenge gender stereotypes."

"As women in developing countries are particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change, UNIDO supports universal access to clean, reliable and affordable energy sources, and promotes the use of energy-efficient and renewable energy technologies. In its technical cooperation, UNIDO ensures that women and men have equal access to awareness-raising and training sessions on renewable energy and energy efficiency services. Additionally, UNIDO promotes the participation and leadership of women in the development of sustainable energy policies and regulatory frameworks for industry, as well as in the identification of energy-efficient solutions and technologies. One of many examples is Morocco, where UNIDO helped improve the competitiveness of small-scale enterprises in the areas of food and textile processing that are managed and owned by women. More than 400 women entrepreneurs have been trained in business management, good manufacturing, traceability systems and food safety. As a result, they have experienced a 40 per cent increase in productivity and a 50 per cent increase in income."

"Building on the results achieved, increased efforts are however needed to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of ISID. UNIDO's vision is a world where economic development is inclusive and sustainable, and economic progress is equitable. On International Women's Day, I encourage you to join women and men all over the world in calling for the achievement of gender equality as a foundation for creating shared prosperity, advancing economic competitiveness and safeguarding the environment."