

Statement of the Director-General of UNIDO at the UNIDO Panel Discussion

“Sustainable leadership: Women in business”

on the occasion of International Women's Day, Vienna, 8 March 2016

Excellencies,

Esteemed panellists,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a true pleasure to welcome you to UNIDO's celebration of International Women's Day!

The 2016 theme for International Women's Day is “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality”.

Here at UNIDO, we could also say “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it up for Women's Economic Empowerment”.

Why do I say this?

Because investing in the economic empowerment of women sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive industrial development.

Women make an enormous economic contribution, whether in businesses, as entrepreneurs, as employers or as employees, or by doing care work at home.

But they also remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Gender discrimination means that women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs, and only make up a small minority of those in senior positions.

Women represent approximately 40 per cent of the labour force and hold an increasing share of all university degrees. But only 17 per cent of women hold

board positions and less than 5 per cent of the CEOs in Fortune 500 companies are women.

This is despite the fact that many studies show that gender equality positively contributes to economic growth.

For example, a recent report from the consultancy firm McKinsey estimates that if women matched men in terms of work — not only participating in the labour force at the same rate, but also working as many hours and in the same sectors — global GDP could increase by an estimated US\$28 trillion, or 26 per cent, by 2025.

But all over the world women are prevented from participating equally in the economy and as entrepreneurs due to restrictive legal and economic frameworks, the burden of unpaid care work and harmful gender stereotypes. Everywhere, women continue to be denied equal pay for work of equal value.

As a result, not only women but the global economy as a whole suffers.

We cannot afford this. As governments struggle to stimulate their economies, momentum is growing for a new industrial era that will focus on effectively tapping into the enormous pool of female talent and entrepreneurs.

UNIDO is helping to give women a fair chance by considering how each one of its projects can impact women and men differently, and by making sure that projects do not perpetuate gender inequalities.

To step up its game for gender equality, UNIDO has recently adopted a new gender policy and gender strategy, and is constantly increasing its portfolio of projects designed to empower women economically.

UNIDO's approach to gender equality within the organization and in its technical cooperation has received strong support from Member States. Notably, they adopted a Resolution entitled "UNIDO, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women" during the 16th session of the General Conference.

I am very grateful to Member States for their continued support, which is also visible in your participation at today's panel discussion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The thread running through UNIDO's work and today's discussion is that we cannot afford to continue to pollute and waste resources as part of the industrialization process. Improving the environmental performance of enterprises and industrial facilities is another top priority for UNIDO in order to secure a sustainable future for all.

Considering the leading role of women entrepreneurs in managing environmentally sustainable businesses, the discussion today will focus on how we can best apply their examples to transform and "green" sectors, and to gear up gender equality.

How can their experiences be scaled up so that we see a real increase in the number of women-led sustainable enterprises by 2030?

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my hope that this panel debate will inspire both thought and action, for both will be needed as we continue on the journey of making women's economic empowerment an integral part of sustainable and inclusive industrial development and our delivery on the 2030 Agenda.

For UNIDO, gender equality and women's empowerment underlie the true spirit of the 2030 Agenda and are inextricably linked to our vision of inclusive and sustainable industrial development. UNIDO recognizes that everyone should benefit from industrial growth, and that prosperity should be shared equally among women and men in all countries.

Great progress has been made, but we are not there yet. On this International Women's Day, I therefore join the rest of the UN system in reaffirming our commitment to achieve Planet 50-50 by 2030, to ensure dignity and prosperity for all women and men.

Thank you and Happy International Women's Day!