

International Women's Day 2017

Message by Mr. LI Yong, Director General of UNIDO

“Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030”:

The theme of this year's International Women's Day celebration “Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030” goes to the very heart of UNIDO's mandate on inclusive and sustainable industrial development. UNIDO understands that women are powerful agents of change, and supports the unlocking of women's potential for success. Gender equality in the world of work is not only a matter of human rights. It will also allow economies to grow faster, lift people out of poverty and enable sustainable development.

Even though the last five decades have seen great reforms of the labour market in terms of enabling women's equal participation, inequalities still prevail. Women struggle to become equals in the formal labour market, there are persistent wage gaps, and women are hampered in their access to credit, technology and education. At the current rate of progress, the gender gap between women and men will not close for several generations, limiting human potential and wasting a valuable opportunity for economic development. Accelerating change and ensuring the appropriate use of half the world's talent pool will therefore crucially influence the growth and competitiveness of industries.

Gender equality is a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and a driver of progress across all the SDGs, including goal 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure. UNIDO is determined to be an active and vital partner in efforts to create gender equality by 2030. We focus on creating real and substantial change for women, enabling them to become equal partners in industrial development. We integrate gender aspects across our areas of expertise and, by doing so, identify women and men's particular needs: be it access to technology, markets, decision-making or capacity-building. We address structural inequalities and entrenched biases by assessing industrial policies and their impact on women and men, ensuring that our efforts leave no one behind.

UNIDO is at the helm of levelling the playing field for women and men by giving women opportunities to prosper through capacity-building, technology and market access, as well as challenging gender stereotypes in the workplace. In a UNIDO-supported project in Iraq, women form part of Scania's team working with heavy trucks, buses and engines. Through the forestry training centres in South Africa, UNIDO provides capacity-building and targets women to enable their integration into the value chain. UNIDO projects in the Middle East and North Africa region also support the development of women's entrepreneurship and creative industries to generate employment, equal wages and decent working conditions for women.

On International Women's Day 2017, I reaffirm UNIDO's commitment to create gender equality in the world of work by 2030 so that women and men can thrive equally and so that economies will prosper.