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ОБЩЕСТВЕННАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ  
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**SPIEF**  
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FORUM

 **ROSCONGRESS**

## UNIDO Interregional Forum

# Women's Entrepreneurship

Challenges and Solutions in Europe and the Arab Region





# UNIDO

The mandate of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is to promote and accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID) in developing countries and economies in transition by contributing to poverty reduction, economic growth, and sustainable development.

The economic empowerment of women has proven to be a critical component of sustainable growth and poverty reduction. All over the globe, including in technologically advanced societies, limited economic empowerment of women is still among the major hindrances to lasting prosperity. Even though more and more women are starting businesses globally, they still manage fewer and smaller businesses than men, often in less profitable sectors.

Women's empowerment has been recognized as a vital component of sustainable development in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where the empowerment of all women and girls is a standalone goal (SDG 5) that strongly interconnects with all of the other goals set as part of the 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development. The global commitment to women's empowerment has never been stronger and women's entrepreneurship has been identified as one of the most important factors in this regard. Women's economic inclusion is a fundamental building block in creating stable, prosperous, and peaceful societies.

UNIDO recognizes that the economic empowerment of women has a significantly positive impact on sustained economic growth and sustainable industrial development, which in turn are drivers of poverty reduction and social integration. The Organization pursues, inter alia, the programmatic goal of promoting women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in line with its mandate to accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development for achieving shared prosperity, which is fully recognized in SDG 9 (*Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*). Many other goals in the 2030 Agenda are also relevant to UNIDO's mandate, such as those related to poverty reduction, decent work, and sustainable economic growth.



# The Interregional Forum: Women's Entrepreneurship – Challenges and Solutions in Europe and the Arab Region, May 31, 2017, St. Petersburg

The UNIDO Forum 'Women's Entrepreneurship – Challenges and Solutions in Europe and the Arab Region', organized on the sidelines of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) 2017 on May 31, 2017 in St. Petersburg, provides a cross-regional perspective on the best practices and prevalent challenges in scaling up women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurial activities.

The objective of the Forum is to outline sustainable policies and institutional and grassroots solutions through discussing selected case studies and sharing experience from the Russian Federation and Arab countries. In addition, UNIDO approaches supporting the process of enhanced economic empowerment and entrepreneurship among women will be presented.

The Interregional Forum is structured into three panel sessions focusing on women's economic empowerment in the context of inclusive and sustainable industrial development, creating solutions to the women's entrepreneurship challenge, and the UNIDO approach to fostering women's economic empowerment. Each session will host distinguished experts who will discuss the key issues surrounding women's entrepreneurship in the industrial context, such as the role of the public and private sectors, as well as technology and investment solutions.

Over 150 participants are expected at the Forum, including high-level government officials engaged in supporting women's

economic empowerment at the national and regional levels and representatives from women's entrepreneurship advocacy groups, networks of male and female professionals and entrepreneurs, and other business networks.

The main questions which will guide the Forum include:

- › *How does scaling up women's entrepreneurship contribute to inclusive and sustainable development and boost economic growth?*
- › *What are the most successful innovative approaches to scaling up women's economic empowerment?*
- › *How can UNIDO and its partners support the process of enhanced economic empowerment and entrepreneurship among women?*

The event will take a forward-looking approach, identifying actions relevant to UNIDO and its partners which will contribute to the economic empowerment of women across the field of inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

The event is organized by UNIDO in cooperation with the OPORA RUSSIA Committee on the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship and the Arab International Center for Entrepreneurship and Investment, Bahrain (AICEI). It is co-sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and organizational support is provided by the Roscongress Foundation.



# UNIDO and women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship

UNIDO is committed to promoting gender equality and has built the necessary structure to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout the Organization. The UNIDO Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Strategy for 2016–2019 support this endeavour. To harness the economic potential of women – half of the world's population – UNIDO mainstreams gender in all its core programmes and activities, complemented by specific interventions for women's economic empowerment.

UNIDO spearheads a range of technical assistance projects for the private sector to bolster its contribution to sustainable growth, employment, and income generation. Private sector development can be successful in addressing and scaling up women's economic opportunities, contributing to skills development, fostering women-led businesses, and increasing access to networks as well as global markets.

UNIDO is contributing to women's empowerment through industrial upgrading and modernization projects by improving the competitiveness of SMEs, providing direct technical assistance to enterprises on a pilot basis thereby facilitating job creation and addressing the issues caused



by migration, fostering stable industrial and socioeconomic development, and generating and increasing exports by non-extractive industries. This will strengthen human and technical capacities, with a particular focus on women and young people.

Special attention to women's entrepreneurship is given by the UNIDO Network of Investment and Technology Promotion Offices (ITPOs). UNIDO ITPOs open up opportunities for investors and technology suppliers to find potential partners and offer unique services to both entrepreneurs and business institutions. ITPOs host officials from developing countries and economies in transition to give them hands-on training in investment promotion techniques so that delegates are able to promote portfolios of screened investment and technology opportunities from their own countries.



In this context, the UNIDO ITPO and the AICEI in Bahrain implemented the Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion (EDIP) programme, designed to build and strengthen the business and technical skills of potential and existing enterprises, with a particular focus on those led by women. The programme provides a variety of support services including business counselling, market assessments, technology selection, business plan preparation, and access to finance. First developed in 2000 in Bahrain, the EDIP programme has since been successfully implemented in 50 countries from Latin America, to Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and all the way to China. Strengthening women's empowerment can support inclusive growth by fostering investment in human capital and stimulating the participation of women in the labour force. Furthermore, entrepreneurship is a largely untapped source of vital human capital.

Another initiative launched with the support and coordination of the ITPO Network Coordination Unit and UNIDO ITPOs in Italy and Bahrain, in cooperation with the authorities of the Basilicata region, was a workshop titled 'When Creativity Meets Business: Sharing Stories of Women Entrepreneurs for Local Development' in December 2015. The event brought together women entrepreneurs, experts, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers from Italy and 12 countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The focus was on women in business and entrepreneurship and on promoting networking between institutional and business representatives. Matera, a city in the region of Basilicata, has been designated the European Capital of Culture for 2019 and, under this umbrella, various follow-up activities are planned by UNIDO's wider ITPO network around the theme of promoting women-led enterprise development.



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