



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Opening speech of
Mr. LI Yong
Director General, UNIDO

Panel Session

**“Women executives in building
successful business models”**

Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum 2019

6 June 2019
ExpoForum, Saint Petersburg

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), I would like to warmly welcome you at this panel session jointly organized by UNIDO and our honorable Russian partners – the Council of the Eurasian Women’s Forum established under the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the Roscongress Foundation. Today’s session is devoted to the topic of “Women executives in building successful business models”. This is a topic which is particularly relevant in the context of our common aspiration to attain inclusive and sustainable development on the global, regional and national level.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment is firmly embedded in UNIDO and, working together with our Russian counterparts we have many successful endeavors aimed at mainstreaming women’s economic empowerment agenda in the region of Europe and Central Asia.

I am delighted that this is the third consecutive year of the UNIDO’s active participation in the prestigious Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum. We are very pleased to have the Government of the Russian Federation accompanying us on this rewarding, albeit challenging journey towards enhanced participation of women in economic and industrial development.

Two years ago, UNIDO organized an interregional forum on “Women’s Entrepreneurship - Challenges and Solutions in Europe and the Arab region”. It took place here, in this beautiful city in 2017 and brought together over 220 delegates from 40 regions in the Russian Federation and Arab region. This forum created the foundation for future spin-off activities in the field of women’s economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. Maintaining momentum, one year later in 2018 UNIDO organized another international forum on the same site, titled “Increasing the contribution of women to economic growth and prosperity: Creating an enabling environment”. More than 200 participants from all over the world came together to share their experiences on the challenges and best-practice

solutions for scaling up successful models for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.

This year, we have gathered again to discuss a very important topic of the role of women's leadership in building successful business models. We do this again as women are still notably underrepresented in corporate leadership. Globally, just around 34% of managerial positions are held by women, although business evidence suggests that gender diversity at the executive's level is highly beneficial. Decreasing disparities leads to improved decision-making, higher performance, and as a result, greater outputs. Women contribute to the establishment of a broader talent pool, better understanding of customer's needs and greater coherence within the company. Moreover, women are more conscious users of resources and can have a significant positive impact on the organization's sustainability.

By empowering women in industries, future generations are also benefiting, and contributing to diversity, inclusiveness, and prosperity. We are here to explore action-oriented approaches, best practices, and solutions on how to foster women's leadership in industries, thus achieving better outcomes and contributing to the overall economic growth.

The new era of industrialization, marked by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), digitalization and innovation provides new evolving opportunities for women in pursuing professional growth. UNIDO is striving to help women and young girls acquire necessary knowledge and skills required by the new technological environment to further strengthen their competitive advantage on the global labor market. To advance the global discussion on this topic, UNIDO, in cooperation with its Russian counterparts will organize a panel session "Industry needs women: women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in the context of digitalization", within the programme of the Global Manufacturing and Industrialization Summit 2019. I take this opportunity to invite you to this prominent event to be held from 9 to 11 July 2019 in the city of Yekaterinburg.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me once again to thank our long-standing and reliable partners, who helped organize this and many other global forum events with us under the

ongoing UNIDO project titled “UNIDO as a platform to promote women economic empowerment and entrepreneurship” funded by the Government of the Russian Federation.

Against this backdrop, I would like to welcome Ms. Galina Karelova, Deputy Chairperson of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, who has been in the forefront of UNIDO’s women’s empowerment activities in Europe and Central Asia.

I am also extremely glad to welcome Mr. Denis Manturov, Minister of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation and Ms. Gulnaz Kadyrova, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation. We are very delighted to see your active engagement in UNIDO’s initiatives targeting women’s participation in economic development.

My thanks also to our Goodwill Ambassador, Ms. Veronika Peshkova from the Russian Federation for being here. Ms. Peskkova was appointed last year and we are fortunate to have her on board given her outstanding portfolio in mainstreaming women’s agenda.

To our distinguished speakers and discussants, we are extremely grateful for this opportunity to learn from your unique experience and expertise.

I am confident that today’s event will help reinforce partnerships and facilitate the exchange of successful, applicable models and practices for the promotion of women’s leadership worldwide.

I look forward to thought-provoking presentations and fruitful discussions, and wish you all a productive and insightful day!

Thank you very much.