

**Commission on the Status of Women
61st Session**

Priority Theme:

“Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”

Joint Statement of the United Nations Regional Commissions

**Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to present to you this joint statement on behalf of the five UN Regional Commissions, namely ECA, UNECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA.

The world of work is changing rapidly. Technological innovations and digital integration are speeding up global interconnections and accelerating already fast-moving supply chains. Changes in business models are creating new industries and disrupting existing ones. The confluence of technological change as well as socio-demographic dynamics is ushering what is being called a Fourth Industrial Revolution.¹ As consumer markets in the global south and the global north become even more intertwined these transformations are likely to have profound effects on our globalized economy, but these impacts will not be the same for men and women.

Today, gender equality does not exist, anywhere in the world. Even in richer countries, women still earn less and perform more unpaid care work than men. The types of work that women do are also different; women are often overrepresented in vulnerable work, with little legal and social protections. At the same time, they are underrepresented in STEM fields, exacerbating gender wage gaps and occupational segregation. As disruptive dynamics transform the world of work globally, we are already seeing that inequality is taking center stage, not only between countries, but among rich and poor. In this context, women are at risk of falling further behind. It is therefore imperative to continue to fight for the equal rights and empowerment of women around the world, especially for those that are most vulnerable.

The UN Regional Commissions play an important role in the UN system as well-established conveners of their respective member States, providing an intergovernmental platform to

¹ World Economic Forum (2016). The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workplace Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland

exchange ideas, to support member States with capacity building, and to catalyze the implementation of policies and good practices. They also provide a platform to shine a continuous spotlight on the unequal status of women and girls in each region, be it through the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action or through focused analytical work. Furthermore, as conveners of the Regional Coordination Mechanisms, the Regional Commissions facilitate coordination among the different UN agencies working towards creating a more equal world for women and girls.

Permit me to provide some highlights of the work of each Regional Commission.

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

The ECA has put women's economic empowerment at the center of its work as defined in its strategic framework, namely, the Continent-Wide Initiative for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment that was endorsed by the AUC-ECA Joint Conference of Ministers of Finance and Economic Development in May 2014. Among three of the pillars of the strategy, women's economic empowerment is identified as the core of the work of ECA on gender and development. The women's economic empowerment includes work on promoting women's entrepreneurship, gender equality in the agricultural sector, the extractive industries, measuring and valuing the economic contribution of women as well as giving attention to the informal sector, where the majority of women worked are concentrated traders. In the agricultural sector, research has been undertaken in gender and the agricultural value chain in Africa and specifically looking at fish, fruit, olives and maize in five countries with a special attention to good practices and strategies for empowering women in agricultural value chains that can be replicated in other countries. In the extractives, studies were undertaken in six countries to specifically look at existing legal frameworks, mining codes and standards, to broaden understanding of the policy treatment of gender issues in ASM; interrogating current and potential financing mechanisms for women in the sector; and to identifying opportunities for private sector partnerships, specifically with large-scale mining. Research is on-going on boosting female entrepreneurship as a catalyst for Women's Economic Empowerment in Africa to identify country-specific pathways toward unshackling women's entrepreneurial potential, tackle challenges faced by female entrepreneurs or to-be entrepreneurs and share best practices of women entrepreneurs in Africa.

Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

UNECE has strengthened its commitment to women's economic empowerment as part of its new Policy for Gender Equality updated to reflect the impact of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development on its substantive work. Achieving gender equality in the various areas: from environmental policy and trade to innovation and knowledge based economy has been addressed by the ECE Sectoral Committees in their discussions on gender mainstreaming. The Working Group on Gender and Economy under the Special Programme for the Economies in Central Asia (SPECA) discussed the benefits of sub-regional cooperation in achieving SDG 5 and its mainstreaming in SDGs. ECE continues to assign great importance to training women

in entrepreneurial skills, as a pillar for women's economic empowerment amidst growing uncertainty and changing world of work. In 2016, two workshops for women entrepreneurs addressed the new challenges of the 2030 Agenda and the needs of women entrepreneurs to respond to these challenges through using new business models, acquiring new skills and knowledge. A regional capacity-building workshop on gender statistics for the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) countries focused on dissemination and communication of gender statistics, and on guiding countries in the production of gender-relevant and sex-disaggregated data to meet the statistical needs of the 2030 Agenda.

Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

ECLAC is supporting member States in accelerating progress towards women's economic autonomy through research and analysis, technical cooperation and capacity building. Governments of the region have requested specific support to move from commitments to implementation through public policies for equality. In the XIII Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, over 35 countries participated and approved the Montevideo Strategy, a political and technical instrument to address structural challenges women face and make progress towards substantive equality. The Montevideo Strategy is the newest addition to the Regional Gender Agenda, a robust body of intergovernmental agreements constructed over the last 40 years to reflect the region's challenges and priorities. This unique process has been enriched by the active participation of civil society and women's organizations. The Strategy includes ten pillars for the implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda and its aim is to serve as a road map for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the regional level from the perspective of gender equality and women's autonomy and human rights. ECLAC is supporting member States from the region to adapt the Strategy to national priorities in order to advance women's rights, empowerment and autonomy. Moreover, the ECLAC Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean provides updated indicators and analysis on women's economic and physical autonomy as well as autonomy in decision-making processes, which are being used to monitor progress in the implementation of the regional level. ECLAC's experience of working closely with users and producers of statistics has also contributed to the construction of indicators at the global level.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

ESCAP has been championing the integration of gender concerns into national policy, planning and budgetary processes through the use of gender mainstreaming tools and cooperation with a number of line ministries and government actors. To advance women's economic empowerment, and recognizing the critical role that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises play in the region's economies, ESCAP has been working with Governments and other stakeholders to adopt legal and regulatory measures that remove barriers for women and foster a gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Furthermore, to enable more women to participate and benefit from the rapidly changing digital economy, ESCAP rolled out a new regional programme in 2016 – the Women and ICT Frontier Initiative – which provides a comprehensive

and integrated ICT and entrepreneurship training programme implemented in partnership with Government agencies and national training institutions. Finally, ESCAP has organized with UN Women, the *Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work*, to provide targeted recommendations on how to tackle the challenges the region is facing in the changing world of work. The Dialogue saw participation of 17 countries with high-level representatives from Ministries responsible for the advancement of gender equality and Ministries of Labour, along with experts and practitioners from the private sector, academia, trade unions, civil society organizations and the United Nations.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

The growing gender-based inequalities in the Arab region are exacerbated by conflict and instability, leading to greater discrimination and violence against women and girls, as well as reversing their developmental gains and empowerment prospects. In this context, ESCWA is marshalling efforts to improve the understanding of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, and working closely with member States, civil society, and other partners to improve national responses with a view to reinforcing resilience and improving prevention and protection measures. In 2016, ESCWA has organized seven workshops at the regional and national levels in support of these efforts using a purpose-built technical assistance package that includes training manual, advocacy materials, and other technical tools tailored to the region's realities. Furthermore, ESCWA has worked with member states and partners to establish a ministerial subcommittee dedicated to accelerating progress towards SDG5. The ministerial subcommittee developed specific terms of reference and a workshop that includes capacity development and targeted policy reforms. One specific area was for the development of an "economic costing model" that enables member States to estimate the costs of violence against women. This work is of vital importance to showcase the economic argument on why addressing violence against women is central for a health functioning economy as well as society.

To conclude, the Regional Commissions have been leveraging their convening power and multi-disciplinary expertise to advance women's economic empowerment in their respective regions. Through regional intergovernmental platforms and a variety of capacity building initiatives, their work has set a strong foundation to ensure that gender equality, women's rights and empowerment continue to be a priority for member States.

Thank you for your attention.