**Parliamentary, Corporate and**

**Diplomatic Forum 2024**

WOMEN WORKFORCE COUNCIL

BACKGROUND GUIDE



**AGENDA:**

*Empowering Women in the Global Economy: Driving Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth*

**EXECUTIVE BOARD:**

Vinita Bishnoi *(Chairperson)*

Sumonit Sengupta *(Vice Chairperson)*

Ritika Mishra *(Rapporteur)*

**Letter from the Executive Board**

**Topic:** Empowering Women in the Global Economy: Driving Sustainable

Development and Inclusive Growth

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Women Workforce Council at the Parliamentary, Corporate, and Diplomatic Forum 2024. This year’s agenda, Empowering Women in the Global Economy: Driving Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth, presents a vital opportunity to discuss the role of women in building a more equitable and resilient world economy.

The council’s goal is to examine the challenges and opportunities around women’s economic empowerment. We will focus on essential issues like bridging the gender wage gap, increasing female representation in influential sectors, supporting women entrepreneurs, and expanding educational and skill-building resources. Addressing these areas is not just about equity—it is a strategic step toward unlocking the full economic potential of our societies.

Throughout this session, we encourage you to propose practical and innovative solutions that advance these objectives, keeping in mind the diverse economic and social contexts we represent. By working together, we aim to create strategies that pave the way for inclusive growth where women’s contributions to the global economy are recognized and valued.

We look forward to the insights and ideas each of you will bring. May this be a productive, thought-provoking session that inspires meaningful change.

Warm regards,

**Vinita Bishnoi** (Chairperson)

**Sumonit Sengupta** (Vice Chairperson)

**Ritika Mishra** (Rapporteur)

**INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA**

As part of the global commitment to achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth, empowering women in the workforce has emerged as a central focus. This agenda, Empowering Women in the Global Economy: Driving Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth, reflects a growing understanding that gender equality in economic participation is essential for economic stability, innovation, and overall societal well-being.

Historically, the role of women in the workforce has shifted dramatically, especially since the 20th century. Key milestones include women’s increased participation during World War II, the civil rights movement's emphasis on gender equality, and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which emphasized economic equality for women.

Influential global movements and agreements like the UN’s establishment of UN Women, ILO conventions on gender equality, and CEDAW have laid the groundwork for gender equity in the workplace. However, significant gaps remain, underscoring the need for continued efforts.

Empowering women economically has proven benefits for sustainable development. Studies show that gender equality directly contributes to poverty reduction, economic growth, and social resilience, aligning closely with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

The Women Workforce Council seeks to analyse the multiple facets of economic inclusion, particularly in promoting policies that ensure equal opportunities, equitable pay, and supportive ecosystems for women entrepreneurs and professionals. This guide will examine the various dimensions of women’s empowerment in the economy, assess obstacles to their equal participation, and explore potential paths for achieving gender-inclusive economic growth.

**KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED**

Gender Pay Gap: Why It Matters and How to Fix It

The gender wage gap is real—and hurts women across the board by suppressing their earnings and making it harder to balance work and family. Serious attempts to understand the gender wage gap should not include shifting the blame to women for not earning more. Rather, these attempts should examine where our economy provides unequal opportunities for women at every point of their education, training, and career choices.

Gender pay gaps represent one of today’s greatest social injustices. According to the ILO Global Wage Report 2018/19, women earn on average about 20 percent less than men, although there are wide variations across countries. Many factors can lie behind gender pay gaps, including differences in educational attainment, occupational segregation, or discrimination in pay and in access to particular types of jobs. Motherhood also brings about a wage penalty that can persist across a woman’s working life.

COVID-19 has highlighted the critical importance of health and care workers, who were applauded and celebrated. It also laid bare the extent of inequalities faced by workers in this highly feminized sector for decades. Notable among these inequalities is the gender pay gap. It is for this reason that the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization co-developed the first-ever global sectoral gender pay gap report.

This report was launched at the 2022 HLPF side event, with the aim of driving commitment to integrated policy action on improving gender equality, decent work, economic growth, and good health and well-being. In particular, the report shows that whereas the health and care sector remain a major source of employment for women worldwide (representing 67 percent of workers in the sector), women nevertheless suffer a double jeopardy: average earnings in the sector are lower than in other sectors, with a 24 percent gender pay gap, which is, on average, higher than in non-health sectors.

ILO documents and publications related to the question of the gender pay gap aim to provide tools that support ILO Member States’ efforts in progressively reducing and eliminating gender pay gaps.

Key documents

* [Discrimination](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C111) [(Employment](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C111) [and](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C111) [Occupation)](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C111) [Convention,](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C111) [1958](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C111) [(No.](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C111) [111)](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C111)
* [Equal](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C100) [Remuneration](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C100) [Convention,](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C100) [1951](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C100) [(No.](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C100) [100)](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_Ilo_Code:C100)

Educating Women

Ensuring that all girls and young women receive a quality education is their human right, a global development priority, and a strategic priority. Girls’ education goes beyond getting girls into school. It is also about ensuring that girls learn and feel safe while in school; have the opportunity to complete all levels of education, acquiring the knowledge and skills to compete in the labour market; gain socio-emotional and life skills necessary to navigate and adapt to a changing world; make decisions about their own lives; and contribute to their communities and the world.

Both individuals and countries benefit from girls’ education. Better-educated women tend to be more informed about nutrition and healthcare, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and their children are usually healthier, should they choose to become mothers. They are more likely to participate in the formal labour market and earn higher incomes. A 2018 World Bank study estimates that the limited educational opportunities for girls and barriers to completing 12 years of education cost countries between US$15 trillion and $30 trillion in lost lifetime productivity and earnings. All these factors combined can help lift households, communities, and countries out of poverty.

According to UNICEF estimates, around the world, 122 million girls are out of school, including 34 million of primary school age and 87 million of secondary school age. Globally, primary, and secondary school enrolment rates are getting closer to equal for girls and boys (92% male, 90% female). But while enrolment rates are similar—indeed, two-thirds of all countries have reached gender parity in primary school enrolment—completion rates for girls are lower in low-income countries, where 63% of female primary school students complete primary school compared to 67% of male primary school students. In low-income countries, secondary school completion rates for girls also continue to lag, with only 38% of girls completing lower secondary school compared to 43% of boys. Upper secondary completion rates have similar disparities, with rates of 26% for young men and 21% for young women.

Both girls and boys are facing a learning crisis. Learning Poverty (LP) measures the share of children who are not able to read proficiently at age 10. While girls are on average 4 percentage points less learning-poor than boys, the rates remain very high for both groups. The average of Learning Poverty in low- and middle-income countries is 50% for females and 56% for males. The gap is narrower in low-income countries, where Learning Poverty averages about 93% for both boys and girls.

Gender bias within schools and classrooms may also reinforce messages that affect girls’ ambitions, their perceptions of their roles in society, and produce labour market engagement disparities and occupational segregation. When gender stereotypes are communicated through the design of school and classroom learning environments or through the behaviour of faculty, staff, and peers, they have a sustained impact on academic performance and choice of field of study, especially negatively affecting young women pursuing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

Educating women is crucial for improving national economies and increasing GDP. Countries should implement various policies to abolish this discrimination.

Legal frameworks for Gender Equality

Legal literacy and access to justice for women are crucial to addressing gender inequality. Access to justice entails the ability to exercise the same legal rights as men to sue, apply for legal aid, provide testimony, and obtain a fair trial. However, women often experience legal restrictions due to gender-based discrimination. When women have adequate access to justice and their rights are enforced, it discourages gender-based discrimination.

In several countries, the legal age to marry is lower for women than for men. Early marriage may lead to early motherhood, which hinders girls’ chances of continuing their education and limits their prospects for work. Eliminating child marriage today could increase long-term annual per capita real GDP growth by about 1 percentage point in emerging and developing countries (UN Women 2020). This economic impact is closely connected to legal norms that provide for the husband’s power over the marriage (and the wife’s obedience). A study found that legal discrimination against women in the form of limits on their ability to be head of household negatively correlates with female labour force participation.

Employment is the most common way that women can participate and contribute to the economy. When women are prevented from obtaining employment, the economy loses significant potential for growth. Globally, 55 percent of adult women are in the labour market compared with 78 percent of men. Moreover, women face a 37 percent wage gap and a 51 percent income gap (the ratio of total wage and non-wage income of women compared to men; World Economic Forum 2021). There are often legal restrictions on women’s ability to work, including laws that prohibit them from choosing certain professions or industries according to their interests and abilities, as well as laws that require a spouse or other male relative to provide work authorization. Studies show that such discrimination significantly predicts the gender wage gap.

As numerous organizations have found, women continue to be paid less than men for work of equal value. Data show that fewer than half of countries have a law mandating equal pay for equal work (World Bank 2021).

The existing inequality between men and women under law has various root causes, including cultural norms, traditions, and belief systems that promote differential treatment of women. Additionally, plural or inherited legal systems often include legal provisions that are gender biased. Legal reform can change attitudes and behaviours, making it an important tool for addressing gender inequality.

**Legal Framework of Africa**

After the independence movements prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, many countries made significant progress in removing legal impediments to women’s economic empowerment by adopting several international, regional, and subregional conventions that promote gender equality. The most important treaty is the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which has been adopted by most countries, including 46 in sub-Saharan Africa. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has been signed and ratified by all countries in sub-Saharan Africa, except Somalia. This treaty sets forth a plan for women’s empowerment and is considered the key global policy document on gender equality.

At the regional level, the Protocol to the 2003 African Charter on Human and People’s

Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the “Maputo Protocol”) has been signed by 43 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, but only 21 states ratified it. This protocol was drafted by the African Union to supplement the commitments of the 1981 African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (the “Banjul Charter”). Article 18 calls on states to eliminate discrimination against women and to protect women’s rights in alignment with international declarations and conventions. It also defines a multitude of women’s rights, including economic, social, civil, political, cultural, and environmental rights.

At the subregional level, treaties and conventions also support women’s gender equality and empowerment. For instance, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Treaty (1975, revised in 1993) includes a dedicated article on women and development (Article 66). Additionally, both the 2008 Southern African

Development Community’s (SADC) Gender Protocol and the 2016 East African Community Gender Equality and Development Bill aim to enhance planning, implementation, and monitoring of policies that support eliminating discrimination, empowering women, and achieving gender equality in their respective subregions. The Supplementary Act related to Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region (2015) was adopted to strengthen the harmonization of national legislation with international standards on women’s rights.

Empowering Women Through Entrepreneurship

In many countries, women continue to be under-represented in the workforce. While entrepreneurship can effectively help women find employment and gain financial independence, a lack of access to education, training, finance, business support measures, and mentors makes getting started a challenge. As part of its work to understand the situation of women’s entrepreneurship in countries bordering Europe, the ETF identifies good practice examples to share with training providers and policymakers.

One example is the Advancing Gender Equality and the Rights of Survivors of Gender-Based Violence program in Armenia. This innovative training program provides vocational training for women survivors of gender-based violence, enabling them to plan, organize, finance, and manage their own small businesses. While many women in Armenia are highly educated, traditional male-female roles, together with a lack of childcare and flexible working conditions, restrict women’s economic opportunities. Domestic violence against women is also widespread.

Funded by the Near East Foundation and delivered with the Gegharkunik Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the program empowers women survivors of violence through employment opportunities.

Strengthening Rural Economies Through Women

Cooperatives

Cooperatives are leaders in promoting inclusive economic growth by providing equitable and accessible solutions to economic and social stressors. Two of the seven principles of cooperatives are “voluntary and open membership” and “concern for community,” which call upon cooperatives to create opportunities for all people and prioritize community betterment. Cooperatives are also a proven avenue for women’s economic advancement, as they provide opportunities to become business owners and share in the risks and rewards of entrepreneurship. Through cooperatives, women have improved access to training, resources, and financial products to grow their businesses and improve their economic well-being.

Global Communities implements the USAID Cooperative Development Program called Cooperative Leadership Engagement Advocacy and Research (CLEAR), which coaches cooperatives on successful and sustainable business models. Through cooperative development projects, Global Communities has documented how cooperative membership empowers women to access economic opportunities and grow their businesses. Since 2018, the CLEAR project has supported 19 worker cooperatives in Kenya, benefiting nearly 2,000 women cooperators.

One example comes from the Vision 4 Housing cooperative in Kenya. While women in Kenya have the right to own property, strong patriarchal norms mean it is still uncommon for women to inherit or purchase land. However, through membership in the housing cooperative, single and widowed women have a greater ability to own land and homes.

Cooperatives are opening doors for women entrepreneurs by creating safe and inclusive educational opportunities in traditionally male-dominated industries, such as the energy sector. For example, the Women in Sustainable Energy and

Entrepreneurship (WISEe) worker cooperative in Kenya trains women in solar panel engineering and installation. After training, members are certified through the cooperative, leading to more employment opportunities than their uncertified peers receive. The cooperative continues supporting members by sourcing installation materials, marketing products, and assigning teams of member engineers to complete installation projects. The WISEe cooperative has created more jobs for women in STEM and increased job opportunities for its members. WISEe trainings and solar panel services are marketed through social media and mass text messaging campaigns, resulting in a sold-out recent training and a fully booked schedule for the cooperative.

The Role of Governments, Corporations, and Civil Society

in Supporting Women's Careers

To advance gender equality in the workforce, governments, corporations, and civil society play essential and complementary roles. Their combined efforts address multifaceted barriers women face in career progression and help create inclusive work environments, equitable policies, and societal changes.

***Governments*** can play a crucial role by implementing policies that address gender

inequalities, such as equal pay legislation, parental leave, and anti-discrimination laws. For instance, Iceland has taken significant steps toward gender equality by mandating that companies prove equal pay for equal work. This model could serve as a framework for other nations aiming to reduce gender disparities in wages.

***Corporations*** also have an influential role, with many increasingly recognizing the importance of gender diversity in leadership and across all job levels. Initiatives like gender-sensitive hiring practices, flexible working hours, and mentorship programs are increasingly common in corporations worldwide. Multinational companies like Unilever and Coca-Cola have set measurable targets to increase female representation in leadership roles and broader sectors, serving as examples of how the private sector can actively support women’s career progression.

**Civil society organizations (CSOs)**, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international groups, often serve as advocates for gender equity. Organizations such as UN Women and CARE International provide resources and training, especially in low-income countries, to build skills and networks for women. CSOs also work to hold governments and companies accountable for their commitments to gender equity, creating a balanced system of checks and advocacy. Together, these three pillars of society foster an environment where women’s careers are supported from various angles, making meaningful and sustainable progress possible.

Beyond individual initiatives, a multi-sectoral approach that includes accountability and assessment can drive sustainable change. Collaborative efforts can help dismantle barriers, ensuring women's career opportunities improve continuously. Together, stakeholders can create an environment that nurtures women's professional growth.

Legal Reforms to Ensure Safer Working Environments for Women

Legal reforms aimed at creating safer and more inclusive workplaces are critical for encouraging women's participation in the workforce. Laws that protect women from workplace harassment, discrimination, and unsafe conditions not only enhance their well-being but also allow them to contribute fully to the economy. The #MeToo movement, which started in the *United States* and has since spread globally, highlights the need for robust legal protections against workplace harassment. In response, several countries have strengthened their harassment laws, with *France*, for example, introducing on-the-spot fines for catcalling and street harassment.

Other nations have also made strides in legally enforcing safety in workplaces. In India, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2013 requires companies to set up internal complaints’ committees, thereby establishing a framework to address workplace misconduct. Similarly, countries such as Sweden and Norway have comprehensive anti-discrimination laws that offer recourse for women facing harassment or unequal treatment. These laws are complemented by initiatives such as mandatory training for employees and clear policies on zero tolerance for harassment.

Despite these advancements, many nations, especially in developing regions, struggle with enforcement. This topic encourages delegates to explore how governments can implement and enforce robust legal frameworks that prioritize women’s safety in all industries. The discussion might also consider how international organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) can support countries in establishing globally recognized standards to protect women across sectors.

To truly enhance the safety of women in workplaces, legal reforms must be accompanied by cultural shifts that foster respect and equality. Legal provisions are more effective when paired with awareness campaigns and workplace training programs that address implicit biases and harassment. For example, Sweden’s approach includes not only rigorous legal measures but also proactive training and awareness campaigns to cultivate an inclusive workplace culture. Additionally, the effectiveness of legal protections often relies on streamlined reporting mechanisms that allow women to voice concerns without fear of retaliation. Delegates might explore how workplace monitoring systems and anonymous reporting tools can be implemented to strengthen existing legal frameworks, ensuring that women’s safety is upheld universally, irrespective of sector or employment type.

Social Protection for Women in Informal Sectors

Women constitute a significant portion of the informal workforce worldwide, especially in developing countries. This sector includes occupations such as domestic work, agriculture, street vending, and other forms of self-employment that are typically unregulated and lack formal protections. In many African and South Asian nations, the majority of women work in the informal sector. However, without benefits like healthcare, paid leave, and retirement pensions, these workers are particularly vulnerable to economic instability, illness, and exploitation.

Recognizing this gap, several countries have introduced social protection programs specifically targeting informal sector workers. In Kenya, for instance, the National Hospital Insurance Fund has extended its coverage to include informal workers, allowing women to access critical healthcare services. Brazil’s Bolsa Família program provides conditional cash transfers to low-income families, many of whom are female-headed households, helping them access basic needs and encouraging their participation in the economy.

Social protection policies tailored for informal workers can make a significant difference in these women’s economic security. Delegates may consider how international organizations and governments can work together to extend healthcare, insurance, and income support to women in informal sectors. By examining successful case studies and identifying gaps, discussions can focus on creating systems that support women’s financial stability and overall well-being, regardless of their employment status.

Social protections such as health insurance, maternity leave, and retirement benefits are essential for ensuring economic stability among women in the informal workforce. Many informal workers lack these benefits, which exacerbates the economic insecurity of women already at a disadvantage. Programs like Mexico's Prospera provide financial assistance and healthcare to low-income families, many of which are headed by women in informal jobs. Meanwhile, India has developed the Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act to provide benefits like life and disability cover and old-age pensions. These initiatives serve as important case studies on how governments can create and administer social protections tailored to informal workers. Delegates may wish to explore how governments and international organizations could develop universally applicable models to address the unique needs of women in the informal workforce while considering the budgetary constraints and administrative challenges such programs may entail.

Microfinance as a Tool for Empowering Rural Women

Microfinance has emerged as a powerful tool for empowering women, especially in rural and underserved communities where access to traditional banking is limited. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) provide small loans and financial services to women, allowing them to start or expand small businesses. This support enables women to achieve financial independence and contribute to local economies. Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, one of the first and most successful MFIs, demonstrates the potential of microfinance in elevating women’s economic positions. Over 97% of Grameen Bank’s borrowers are women, showcasing how such models can promote financial inclusion. Women-led microenterprises supported by microfinance have shown positive impacts on local communities. These businesses often reinvest in community needs, such as education and healthcare, leading to improved quality of life for entire families. Microfinance also builds women’s skills in financial management, as many MFIs offer training in budgeting and savings. This has broader economic benefits, as financially literate women are better equipped to manage resources, invest wisely, and avoid exploitative lending practices.

Challenges, however, persist, particularly regarding high interest rates and pressure for quick repayment, which can strain rural borrowers. Delegates are encouraged to explore how microfinance can be refined to support women more effectively. This could include lower interest rates, partnerships with larger banks for better terms, and broader financial literacy programs. Delegates might also consider the role of governments in regulating microfinance institutions to protect women from exploitative practices.

Beyond financial independence, microfinance has shown to be effective in fostering leadership and community engagement among rural women. As women gain financial stability through these loans, they often become role models within their communities, inspiring others to pursue economic opportunities. In regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, where microfinance has seen significant growth, studies indicate that women who have access to microfinance are more likely to invest in their children’s education and health. Organizations like Women’s World Banking are expanding microfinance services to include savings, insurance, and mobile banking, broadening financial inclusion even further. However, microfinance alone cannot address all the economic challenges women face. Delegates could consider complementary solutions, such as combining microfinance with educational programs on financial literacy and entrepreneurship to help women maximize the impact of these loans and ensure long-term financial growth.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Women’s Economic Empowerment

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 on gender equality, provide a global framework to empower women and achieve gender parity by 2030. These goals emphasize the elimination of gender-based discrimination, equal access to resources, and the protection of women’s rights as central to sustainable development. SDG 5 is closely connected to several other goals, such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), demonstrating the integral role women’s empowerment plays in overall global progress.

Women’s economic empowerment underpins many of the SDGs, as it contributes to poverty reduction, improved health, and better educational outcomes for families and communities. Research by the World Bank indicates that countries with higher female labour force participation experience more robust economic growth. For instance, Rwanda, a leader in female parliamentary representation, has made significant strides in aligning its national policies with the SDGs, contributing to notable progress in gender equality and women’s economic participation.

While the SDGs have brought attention to women’s empowerment, challenges persist in achieving these goals, especially in regions with deeply rooted gender inequalities and limited resources. Delegates are encouraged to consider how national and international policies can accelerate the SDGs’ implementation. This may include creating initiatives that promote women’s employment in emerging industries, ensuring equal pay, and providing social protections for women in vulnerable sectors. Ultimately, achieving these goals will require innovative solutions and collaborative efforts among governments, NGOs, and international organizations to ensure women’s inclusion in economic development.

Achieving the SDGs requires coordinated global efforts and locally tailored policies to effectively address specific barriers. By adapting frameworks to support women's economic empowerment, we can foster resilience and drive inclusive growth. Prioritizing gender equality within the SDGs not only benefits women but also strengthens society as a whole, contributing to sustainable development and improved quality of life for all. Together, these efforts form a holistic approach to global development that ensures progress is both inclusive and enduring.

### PAST INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS AND POLICIES

#### The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979)

Adopted by the UN General Assembly, CEDAW serves as a comprehensive international framework to combat discrimination against women. It obliges member states to establish legal standards for gender equality, including equal pay and non-discrimination in employment.

#### The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

This landmark policy initiative, established at the Fourth World Conference on Women, set 12 critical areas for empowering women, including women’s economic rights and participation in leadership. Governments worldwide committed to concrete actions, many of which addressed workplace equality and support for women’s entrepreneurship.

#### International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions

The ILO has set key standards promoting gender equality in employment, including:

* *Equal Remuneration Convention (1951)* – Calls for equal pay for men and women performing work of equal value.
* *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (1958)* – Seeks to eliminate discrimination based on gender, race, and other factors.
* *Maternity Protection Convention (2000)* – Establishes rights related to maternity leave and protections for pregnant workers.

#### UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015)

SDG 5 aims for gender equality, with a specific focus on empowering women and girls. Targets within SDG 5 include equal rights to economic resources, reforms for equitable access to ownership, and the promotion of shared responsibility in households. SDG 8 on "decent work and economic growth" also emphasizes women’s participation in the workforce as a driver of sustainable economic progress.

#### The Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) (2017)

Launched by the World Bank, We-Fi funds projects to provide finance, training, and mentoring to women entrepreneurs, especially in low-income countries. Its mission is to address the unique challenges women face in business, including limited access to capital and support.

#### The Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) (2017)

Led by the ILO, UN Women, and the OECD, EPIC seeks to close the global gender wage gap by uniting governments, employers, and trade unions in promoting equal pay. It supports wage transparency policies and fair compensation practices to address income disparities.

#### Generation Equality Forum (2021)

This multi-stakeholder platform organized by UN Women brought together governments, civil society, and the private sector to accelerate gender equality commitments. It includes a focus on economic justice and rights, aiming to implement policies that provide equal economic opportunities and promote women’s inclusion in all sectors.

RECOMMENDEDSOURCESFORDELEGATES

#### UN Women

* A central hub for reports, statistics, and policy recommendations on gender equality, women’s rights, and economic empowerment.
* **Website**[:](https://www.unwomen.org/) [UN](https://www.unwomen.org/) [Women](https://www.unwomen.org/)

#### International Labour Organization (ILO)

* Offers data and analysis on women’s labour rights, wage equality, and employment trends globally.
* **Website**[:](https://www.ilo.org/) [ILO](https://www.ilo.org/) [Women](https://www.ilo.org/) [and](https://www.ilo.org/) [Work](https://www.ilo.org/)

#### World Bank – Women, Business, and the Law

* An annual report exploring laws and policies affecting women’s economic participation worldwide, with comparisons across regions.
* **Website**[:](https://wbl.worldbank.org/) [World](https://wbl.worldbank.org/) [Bank](https://wbl.worldbank.org/) [Women,](https://wbl.worldbank.org/) [Business,](https://wbl.worldbank.org/) [and](https://wbl.worldbank.org/) [the](https://wbl.worldbank.org/) [Law](https://wbl.worldbank.org/)

#### McKinsey Global Institute – Gender Equality Insights

* In-depth reports on the economic benefits of gender parity and actionable steps for achieving it, with a global perspective.
* **Website**[:](https://www.mckinsey.com/) [McKinsey](https://www.mckinsey.com/) [on](https://www.mckinsey.com/) [Gender](https://www.mckinsey.com/) [Equality](https://www.mckinsey.com/)

#### International Finance Corporation (IFC)

* IFC offers case studies and research on financial inclusion and investment in women-led enterprises worldwide.
* **Website**[:](https://www.ifc.org/) [IFC](https://www.ifc.org/) [Gender](https://www.ifc.org/) [and](https://www.ifc.org/) [Economic](https://www.ifc.org/) [Inclusion](https://www.ifc.org/)

#### UNESCO – Women in STEM Resources

* Studies and initiatives to close the gender gap in STEM education and careers, promoting skills for high-growth sectors.
* **Website**[:](https://en.unesco.org/) [UNESCO](https://en.unesco.org/) [Women](https://en.unesco.org/) [in](https://en.unesco.org/) [STEM](https://en.unesco.org/)

#### Harvard Business Review

* Articles on gender equality in the corporate sector, benefits of diversity in leadership, and strategies for reducing the gender wage gap.
* **Website**[:](https://hbr.org/) [Harvard](https://hbr.org/) [Business](https://hbr.org/) [Review](https://hbr.org/)

#### World Bank – Gender Data Portal

* A global database of gender statistics across topics like education, employment, and political participation.
* **Website**[:](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/) [World](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/) [Bank](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/) [Gender](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/) [Data](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/) [Portal](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/)

### CONCLUSION

As we explore the challenges and opportunities in empowering women within the global economy, the path to tangible progress lies in the united efforts of governments, corporations, and civil society. The recommendations and initiatives proposed by delegates in this forum hold the potential to drive not only meaningful change in women’s lives but also to foster sustainable economic growth, social equity, and innovation on a global scale.

This agenda extends beyond merely addressing gender disparities; it invites a rethinking of economic frameworks to make them inclusive, equitable, and resilient for all. By examining key issues—such as bridging the gender wage gap, expanding access to entrepreneurial opportunities, establishing social protections, and implementing supportive legal reforms—we aim to shape pathways toward a future where economic participation is accessible to all.

Delegates are encouraged to approach these issues thoughtfully, drawing from successful international examples and established best practices, and to formulate solutions that are adaptable to diverse economic landscapes. Through active engagement, collaborative discourse, and committed research, this forum aspires to advance a world where women’s economic contributions are fully recognized, and gender equality is woven into the fabric of global development. We look forward to your insights and your contributions to this crucial dialogue.

May this guide support your preparations and inspire meaningful contributions to our shared objectives. We extend our best wishes for insightful discussions and a productive session ahead. All the best, delegates!