



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

6–17 March 2023

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

### Statement submitted by World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

This statement has been drafted by the Permanent Commission on Social Issues and Women Entrepreneurship of the World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises, whose members are: Dr. Pauline Crawford (UK) Chairperson, Ms. Angeline Henzen (Cameroon) and Ms. Sushma Morthania (India) Vice Chairpersons, Ms. Bernadette Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso), Ms. Diane-Monique Adjanonhoun (Benin), Ms. Nukila Evanty (Indonesia), Ms. Aye Aye Win (Myanmar), with the guidance of the President Ms. Barbara Terenzi, the Board of Directors and the headquarters of the World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises.

The World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises Association pursues the aim of representing and supporting the interests of Small and Medium Enterprises and Crafts with particular attention to countries with less developed economies and female entrepreneurship.

To fully address the themes of the Sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Permanent Commission on Social Issues and Women Entrepreneurship of the World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises focused on issues related to what's happening on the ground in 2022–23 for women entrepreneurs in underdeveloped and developing countries since the 2020/2021 Covid pandemic restrictions impacted women worldwide.

It must be recognized that women constitute a sizable number of Micro Enterprises in many countries. In some states/provinces, they even outnumber men.

Women also provide livelihood to their families. Effort must be made to upgrade their business skills and provide full financial support to them.

Women generally have been found to be very creative. Women entrepreneurs may be guided and motivated to be innovative and benefit from their innovations.

It's important to focus on how technology and innovation can help achieving gender equality to accelerate the value attributed to women in business. Once we elevate these women, the vital resources of funding, education and environmental improvements will be more easily achieved. However, equally important aspect, in all the research of the Commission into different countries, is the cultural awareness of the value of women.

Women need to take joint custody of the world with men. The mission of women is to state the perspective of a woman-centric business life and invite mutually beneficial dialogue with men.

The Commission investigated the problems on the ground, in the countries considered, and their impact on women:

- The marginalization of women, the limitation to innovation and the expansion of women's businesses, also resulting from the lack of resources;
- the main obstacles for women entrepreneurs are in (1) funding, (2) technology, (3) climate change, (4) education and training and (5) entrepreneurial environment;
- How women faced marginalization and issues of violence and abuse on many levels; physical, sexual, emotional, mental, social, or religious.

### **New narratives on gender equality**

Research in USA, UK, Africa, and Asia focused on how women entrepreneurs are treated as business contributors in their families and communities.

It is vital that their voice is heard, understood and resources committed fully and liberally by government policies, major organizations, and economic directives.

In the different countries considered, the Commission found that, in diverse ways, women entrepreneurs are determined to be heard and valued as serious business and social contributors to local and national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the economy in general and social equality.

However:

1. It is slow but critical progress if we are to transform the narrative about gender equality;
2. The way women communicate, relate, and express their requirements for all the resources they need is the journey ahead and is occurring in localized situations. All resources needed – funding, technology, education, and non-violent social norms – are inter-linked for women. Lack of one lead to lack of all ... and vice versa.
3. More positive success story sharing by women entrepreneurs is necessary. Innovation and technological female thinking are enhanced. A negative cultural environment affects gender equality.

### **Reducing marginalization requires awareness education**

Women are still marginalized across the globe to varying degrees. Even where there are localized advances. In my current experiences of global conversations, there are signs that new narratives are starting.

### **Africa is transforming gender equality – with an initiative with lead men (Presidents)**

Under the lead of the African Union, the Presidents of six Central African nations (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Rwanda, Togo, Senegal, and South Africa) voluntarily signed a Charter, initiated in Kinshasa, for Positive Masculinity and the elimination of violence against women and girls, and empowerment of the same in all matter of family, social and business environments. The progress is slow yet the awareness and policy changes for gender equality and gender equity is growing.

### **Impact of the pandemic for women entrepreneurs (and girls)**

We all concurred that life for women entrepreneurs through this pandemic has not progressed as much as we hoped over this last year regarding full gender equality.

When we look at the impact of the economic issues after more than two years of pandemic, virus, and ill-health and economic depression on the lives of female entrepreneurs, the challenges are multiple for women and not the same for men: lack of literacy, lack access to digital platform-market (often no computers, no internet or even electricity in some countries). Difficult access to digital platform impacts women's income and welfare and exacerbates issues in so many areas; Domestic Violence, Finance, Technology, Education, Health – all mixed together for women.

During of pandemic, linkages with domestic violence on women especially when men are laid off work, stressful environments at home, anger, frustration etc. We need joint custody of our world so that men value women. Women want investment, education, green economies, self-funding circular cultures, waste management, etc. These are not implemented as a priority when women are still struggling with their household and lower income.

### **General Recommendations**

- Support gender equality policy changes and take notice of the large numbers of women empowerment networks and promote large scale women-centric organizations;
  - Continue to address the global issues of inequality – if half the world is female, we need to be half of the narrative and decision-making ‘joint custody’ dynamics in our families, communities, businesses, and nations – we need conversations between women and men.
  - Pressure for resources – technology, business education, ease of funding streams, environmental safety measures for women in business and in their communities.
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