



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Check against delivery

**Statement by
Ms. Jane Hodges
Director
Bureau for Gender Equality
54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

Mr. Chairperson,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ILO is honored to address this 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Since 1995 the ILO has been deeply committed to support its Constituents in their efforts to comply with the requirements of the Beijing Platform for Action, with a special, but not exclusive, focus on area F on women and the economy and area A on women and poverty.

Mr. Chairperson,

In 1999, right after his election as Director General of the ILO, Mr. Somavia issued the ILO's gender equality policy. This policy, which makes direct reference to the Beijing Platform for Action, states that the promotion of gender equality in the world of work is responsibility of all ILO staff at all levels and that appropriate measures should be taken to allocate adequate resources and develop accountability and monitoring mechanisms to measure progress in mainstream gender in the world of work. ~~The 183 members of the ILO and its constituents have been kept informed of the results of this policy.~~

Mr. Chairperson,

The ILO's most contemporary and comprehensive contribution to the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women is the International Labour Conference Resolution on Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work, unanimously adopted by representatives of governments, employers and workers in June 2009. The Resolution contains wide-ranging measures that the ILO tripartite constituents should implement to achieve gender equality in the world of work. These measures include, among others, fostering small and medium sized enterprises and women's entrepreneurship as a key means of generating employment and the social and economic empowerment of women. The Cairo Platform of Action for the development of women entrepreneurship in Africa, adopted by the ILO and the African Development Bank on 29 October 2009, is an important milestone in this effort especially as it takes into account the impact of the financial and economic crisis on Africa's poverty rates and its achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Other measures contained in the Resolution include addressing equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value through better understanding of the concept of equal pay using gender neutral job evaluation; enhancing the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all, through gender-responsive extension of social security coverage; including the social protection floor; strengthening women's participation in social dialogue by improving the representation of women in decision-making processes and in leadership positions in governments, employers' and workers' organizations and in social dialogue institutions at the international, regional, national and local levels; developing and disseminating tools and undertaking research to prevent sexual harassment and violence against women at work; and seeking universal ratification of Convention 100 on equal remuneration and Convention 111 dealing with discrimination in employment and occupation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Faced with the prospect of a prolonged global increase in unemployment, poverty and inequality, in June 2009 the ILO organized a Global Jobs Summit where heads of state and government, ministers of labour, worker and employer representatives and other leaders adopted a Global Jobs Pact. ~~The Pact is designed to guide national and international policies aimed at stimulating economic recovery, saving existing and generating new jobs and providing social protection to working women and men and their families. These measures also aim at reducing the time lag between economic growth and employment recovery.~~

The Pact explicitly recognizes the importance of giving equal voice to women and men and the need for gender equality policy responses, and states that *"The current crisis should be viewed as an opportunity to shape new gender equality policy responses. Recovery packages during economic crisis need to take into account the impact on women and men and integrate gender concerns in all measures. In discussions on recovery packages, both regarding their design and assessing their success, women must have an equal voice with men."*

In addition, the 2010 session of the International Labour Conference will discuss Decent Work for Domestic Workers. This will constitute the basis for a first discussion towards an international instrument to protect this category of workers. Women's and girls' participation in domestic work is high all over the world and its hidden nature makes them particularly vulnerable to different hazards, to verbal and physical violence and to sexual abuse. The adoption of a legal instrument to address this issue will add power to governments' efforts to address violation of domestic workers rights, to reduce violence against women, and to address the rights of girls and boys working as domestic workers.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that the achievement of gender equality in the world of work would produce visible results in poverty reduction, sustainable development and eradication of child labour and respond directly and decisively to the Beijing Platform for Action. The ILO, Mr. Chairperson, stands ready to assist its Constituents in this regard.