



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

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Statement by:

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Mr. Chairman,

The International Labour Organization welcomes the choice of financing for gender equality as the topic of this year's Commission on the Status of Women as this is one of the key issues to ensure full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men. Investing in equality reaps profound benefits in terms of economic growth, increased productivity and in addressing the multiple dimensions of poverty

Decent work is labour that is productive, delivers a fair income, security in the workplace, social protection, and allows women and men to express their concerns, as well as organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives. This means that decent work is not only about quantity but also quality: *better jobs* as well as *more jobs* for women and men.

Even if statistics demonstrate that there are today more women than ever before who are economically active, the struggle for equal labour market access is marked by slow progress. World wide, only 67 women are economically active for every 100 man. Moreover, women are most concentrated in less productive jobs such as the care economy, the agricultural sector and services characterized by substandard terms and conditions of work. This situation is even worse for young women and especially young educated women.

Through its Decent Work Agenda the ILO supports member states in providing a minimum social floor for economic life and ensuring a more equitable distribution of the benefits of globalization. Gender issues are integrated in the implementation of the Global Decent Work Agenda through four pillars of rights, full employment, social protection and social dialogue. Within each of the four pillars we have learnt that technical, institutional, human and financial resources must be invested to ensure the gender dimensions are given prominence and specific outcomes with indicators have to be developed.

For example, in Africa and Asia, the ILO has for many years now been supporting countries to invest in entrepreneurship programmes targeting poor women, with a focus on young women and women with disabilities.

In the context of the promotion of women workers' rights, all ILO Conventions are relevant, but when it comes to financing for gender equality, Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration, Convention 111 on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation, Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities and Convention 183 on Maternity Protection are particularly relevant. Moreover, the extension of health coverage and other social security schemes to all workers, including to those working in the informal economy, is critical to ease vulnerabilities in the different stages of the life cycle.

In Jordan, through an actuarial assessment of social protection systems, the ILO examined the feasibility of implementing a maternity cash benefits scheme showing that it is not only feasible but also financially sustainable and that the high costs of hiring women workers is nothing but a myth.

Moreover, governments, workers' and employers' organizations must increasingly invest in enhancing women capacity to organize and to have their collective voices heard at all levels in world of work. Thanks to the efforts of the Tripartite Commission on Gender Equality, in Uruguay an action guide to eradicate discrimination and promote gender equality in the world of work has been adopted.

Mr Chairman, the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, as translated to the national level through the Decent Work Country Programmes, is one vehicle that can help to give gender equality the importance it has and deserves. We have learnt that without adequate financial resources set aside for gender mainstreaming, no decent work policy or programme today, in any part of the world is in a position to effectively enhance gender equality.

Evidence shows that, although the new UN aid architecture is designed to align aid to national development priorities and to pool diverse aid sources into direct support to the national budget or to particular sectors, this does not guarantee that gender equality is recognized as a key component of poverty reduction and national development. Highlighted as a model for other countries, in Tanzania the ILO together with the Government, the employers' and the workers' organizations, has teamed up with UNIFEM and other UN Agencies to ensure that women's employment opportunities are adequately reflected in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes at the regional and local level.

Moreover, the ILO technical cooperation programme, with the support of six of its major donors, has set up a gender budgeting system leading to highly visible and promising results. Thanks to this, today 40% of the ILO multi-lateral programme include a gender mainstreaming strategy and efforts are made to achieve the 100% goal.

As a final point, Mr. Chairman, the ILO participatory gender audit methodology is a significant contribution to the UN Country Teams and the ILO constituents at the national level to assess the effective use of financial, human, institutional resource for the achievement of gender equality. To mention one example out of many, a comprehensive gender audit of ILO constituents was carried out in Sri-Lanka. Based on the findings of this exercise, and in close collaboration with all participating partners, linkages were made to the Sri-Lanka Decent Work Country Programme and existing strategies were reviewed to address discrimination in the world of work in the national context. Similar exercises were carried out in Mozambique, Yemen, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russia Federation to promote organizational learning on how to practically and effectively mainstream gender.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the ILO reaffirms its commitment to contribute to women's empowerment in the world of work through financing for gender equality and looks forward to actively participating in the discussion on this item in the following days.