International Women’s Day 2016

Getting to equal by 2030: The future is now

Background note for ILO panel discussion, ILO, 8 March 2016

I. General

Despite significant progress over the past century, gender equality in the world of work remains an elusive goal. How can we establish a new blueprint for action to make the world of work, in all its dimensions, a more equitable place? In 2016, International Women’s Day provides an opportunity to address the critical issues raised by the newly adopted UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and consider what needs to be done to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls (SDG5), reduce inequality within and among countries (SDG10) and achieve decent work for all women and men (SDG8).

In addition, it also provides an opportunity to review the evolution and current state of the ILO’s work on gender equality. (For more detailed background on the ILO and gender, including the Women at Work Centenary Initiative and the SDGs, see Part III of this note.)

Panelists will meet in Room I of the ILO building at 10:00. The event itself will begin at 11:00 and continue to 12:30. Lunch will follow.

II. The Event

At the ILO in Geneva, a high-level, tripartite panel will focus on the transformative nature of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its implications for the ILO and its constituents on gender equality. The panel members are:

- Her Excellency Pamela Hamamoto, the US Ambassador and Permanent representative to the UN in Geneva
- Ms Linda Kromjong, Secretary-General of the International Organisation of Employers
- Ms Sharan Burrow, General-Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation
- Mr Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General
- Ms Shauna Olney, Chief of the Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch, ILO

Ms Imogen Foulkes, BBC correspondent in Switzerland, will moderate the interactive panel.
Note: This year’s panel is marked by two firsts: it is the first time that both the heads of the ITUC and the IOE will be participating in the panel discussion, and it is the first time that the heads of both organizations are women. In addition, the ILO will also acknowledge the newly created Geneva Gender Champions initiative, and the strong response it has engendered among organizations and missions, including the ILO.

The planned duration of the panel is 90 minutes, beginning at 11:00 a.m. in Room II on level R-3 of the ILO building (this may change if the Governing Body room is available, TBC).

Scenario:

Welcome and introductions: 11:00 to 11:05 a.m.

ILO Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch Chief Ms. Shauna Olney will welcome the audience and introduce the panelists, and then introduce an opening “curtain-raiser” video produced by the student film class at the International School of Geneva Nations Campus. The video will run approximately five minutes, and introduces the 17 SDGs primarily through the voices of 15-year-old students in various languages. It is expected that up to 20 students from the school, including those who appear in the film or worked on its production, will be in attendance, along with at least one faculty member and the Director-General of the International School, Ms Tuck.

Curtain-raiser: 11:05-11:10

Panel discussion, and Q and A: 11:10-12:00

Following the showing of the curtain raiser, Ms. Olney will then give the floor to the moderator, Ms. Foulkes who will introduce the topic and structure of the discussion. She will then welcome panelists and the audience, explain to the audience that they will have a chance to ask questions (but not to make speeches) during the course of the event, and then invite each panelist to make brief introductory remarks (she has proposed a maximum of 2 minutes, or no more than 200 words) outlining their vision of how the 2030 Agenda can make a difference in the pursuit of gender equality in the world of work.

From there she proposed to delve into the question of how such ambitious goals can be achieved over the next 15 years, noting that progress over the past two decades since the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995 and in the 15 years since adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 has been largely insufficient. She will then invite panelists to highlight some major obstacles (including personal experiences), and then discuss what’s different now that the Sustainable Development Agenda has been adopted.

Other issues for discussion may come in the form of questions to the panel either from the moderator or the floor. See indicative list of questions in Part IV.
Note: The moderator has proposed occasionally taking questions from the floor, or Twitter (TBC) during the discussion. The moderator will also remind the audience that only questions relevant to the issues being discussed at the event will be entertained. The moderator will direct questions to panelists who have particular expertise or knowledge in particular fields.

**Summing up: 12:20-12:30**

With about ten minutes to go, the moderator will ask each panelist to briefly sum up their impressions by highlighting the top priority if we want to ‘get to equal by 2030’ or before.

**Closing: 12:30**

Moderator will close with very brief remarks, and thank panelists and the audience for their participation.

**Communications, Media and web pages**

The ILO will launch a new report entitled “Women at Work: Trends 2016” produced as part of the ILO Women at Work Centenary Initiative, worldwide, including at a press briefing scheduled at the Palais des Nations on Monday, 7 March. The report provides the latest ILO data on the position of women in labour markets, examines the factors behind these trends and explores the policy drivers for transformative change.

**The report will be issued under an embargo and cannot be published, broadcast or quoted publicly before 1700 GMT (1800 Geneva time) on Monday, 7 March.**

The report, along with an Executive Summary and Highlights can be provided to event participants in advance for background use only.

No large participation by media in the event is anticipated, but those media who do choose to attend will have been identified by the ILO Department of Communication.

**Graphic materials**

This year GED has commissioned a New York based Japanese artist to create a new illustration to be used on the ILO/ IWD poster in 2016, and which is the visual for the ILO Women at Work Centenary Initiative. The artist is Ms Coco Masuda who developed the graphic illustration used for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women that the ILO used on last year’s ILO women’s day poster. This year’s poster can be found on the ILO International Women’s Day web page (see above URL).
Further questions and contact information

For further information, please contact Mr. Ned Lawton at +41 22 799 78 34, lawton@ilo.org or Mr. Raphael Crowe at +41 22 799 7835, crowe@ilo.org. Mobile numbers are available on request.

III. Background

Gender equality and non-discrimination have been pillars of the ILO’s mission to promote social justice through the world of work since its foundation. As the Organization approaches its second century it has chosen to focus on women in the world of work as one of its centenary initiatives with a view to establishing a clear understanding of where things stand, how gender issues are perceived by women and men, the constraints that exclude women from the world of work or undermine their opportunities, and what needs to be done to achieve more rapid and sustainable progress.

The ILO Women at Work Centenary Initiative takes on added significance in view of the sweeping new Sustainable Development Agenda recently adopted by the global community with the aim of transforming our world by 2030. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are at the centre of this vision, and are critical to the realization of all the Agenda’s goals. And the world of work will be the forum where the struggle to realize gender equality and sustainable development will be lost or won. The focus the ILO Women at Work Centenary Initiative converges with and provides a platform for advancing the 2030 Agenda.

There has been significant progress over the past century in tackling gender inequality. Yet, genuine equality in the world of work remains an elusive goal and large gaps between women and men remain at all levels of the economy: labour market participation, pay and quality of work, work-family balance, domestic and caring responsibilities, voice and social protection. In decision-making and managerial positions, the glass ceiling remains firmly intact.

The new Sustainable Development Agenda goes a long way towards turning these challenges into clear goals; our responsibility now is to turn these goals into reality. Gender issues feature in all 17 of the SDGs, but are of particular importance in the main ILO-related goal SDG 8 on sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and SDG 10 on reducing inequality within and among countries, and of course are the focus of SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

How can we establish a new blueprint for action to make the world of work, in all its dimensions, and in all countries a more equitable place? How do we achieve pay equity, end
discrimination and violence against all women and girls, recognize the value of unpaid care and domestic work, and ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life?

These questions require an urgent response: there is no time to waste and no room for complacency. International Women’s Day provides a platform for looking at the action needed to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment, with decent work for all.

IV. Indicative questions

1. What is your vision of how the SDGs can make a difference in the pursuit of gender equality in the world of work? (each panelist – 2 minutes each)

2. This is a forward-looking transformative agenda: practically what does it mean to you and your work?

3. With 17 goals and 169 targets where do we start if we want to accelerate progress on gender equality in the world of work?

4. What is the key obstacle that risks holding us back from achieving decent work for women by 2030?

5. Can you provide some personal experiences?

6. This is a universal agenda, which requires real change on the ground: What is the role of international Geneva in ensuring we reach these goals?

7. How do we keep gender equality on the agenda when other urgent issues are fighting for space?

8. How do we accelerate closing the gender labour force participation gap, or the gender pay gap?

9. How do we address the additional hours and care responsibilities that may keep women from finding (or keeping) full-time well-paying jobs, and the continued resistance of the glass ceiling and the glass walls.

Note: If there are any questions that you would particularly like to be addressed to you, or others you are not comfortable with, please inform Mr Lawton by 4 March if possible (lawton@ilo.org)
V. Useful links

The ILO has created a webpage for IWD 2016, and will also feature information on the IWD event and the report launch on its main start page. The ILO/IWD page is in the process of being populated, and can be found at:


General information about the Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch:


Decent Work and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda:

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