



Report on CSW61 and Analysis of the Agreed Conclusions

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I. Introduction

The 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, from 13 – 24 March 2017, at a critical juncture in the changing political landscape and realignment of forces mobilized around the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda (GEWE). Champions of GEWE, human rights and the women's movement saw this CSW as a litmus test of the strength of international political commitment in the face of fresh challenges to the historic and hard won normative gains of the gender equality compact secured especially between 2012-2016.

They were concerned whether the international community would hold on to these precious gains and make further progress on all fronts. They also wanted Member States to re-commit to forge ahead on implementing the GEWE promises of the Beijing plus 20 Political Declaration, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Climate Change Agreement, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, and the Quito New Urban Agenda, and with specific reference to the priority theme of CSW61 on **'women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, and its focus area on 'the empowerment of indigenous women'**.

The review theme of MDGs (Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls -agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session) also provided a platform for countries to present their experience and success in implementing and achieving the MDGs for women and girls and how they are now adapting and creating necessary laws, policies, measures and institutions for the gender-responsive implementation of agenda 2030 and its GEWE compact more broadly.

Expectations were also high because CSW61 came on the heels of the landmark Agreed Conclusions of CSW60 which set out a detailed normative roadmap for the gender responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. There was a keenness to affirm the relevance for GEWE of the universality, multilateralism, global solidarity, partnership and development cooperation around the three pillars of the UN's mission of sustainable development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian response.

It was also the **first CSW after the new Secretary-General took office** and proclaimed his determination to put the UN at the forefront of the global movement for the achievement of GEWE. He said at the

[opening of CSW](#) that "the empowerment of women is about breaking structural barriers." "With nearly a billion women entering the global economy in the next decade their empowerment will unleash the potential of all these women and girls - and they will lead the world to a new future." Stressing the importance of accountability, he pledged that the UN and he himself will wholeheartedly support efforts for gender equality and asked all the assembled ministers and officials, delegates, youth and civil society (he addressed a Town Hall of CSOs) "do not let us off the hook. Keep our feet to the fire." The Secretary-General also prioritized preparatory consultations on CSW61 in his Executive Committee.

In [her statements, the Executive Director](#) called this CSW a barometer of the progress on achieving a world free of gender discrimination and inequality, a world that leaves no one behind. She affirmed that women's economic success is critical for flourishing economies, a positive world of work and breaking repeated poverty cycles as well as for the success of the 2030 Agenda. She noted progress in some areas as well as erosion of gains already made. She gave a clarion call to swift and decisive action so that positive developments happen fast enough, reach tipping point numbers, and changes in the world of work do not leave women further behind. She urged for "constructive impatience", "to change the sluggish trajectory and make real breakthrough impact in certain areas with greatest influence."

In this [statement](#), the Chair of CSW stressed the relevance of the 61st session indicating that it "was a demonstration of the strength of our conviction and belief that together, we can and we will accelerate progress towards the empowerment of women and girls everywhere." The chair emphasized that "the future of work should not, and must not, enshrine and perpetuate existing inequalities." The Commission was expected to provide guidance on how to address and eliminate persistent work related barriers within and across countries that discriminate against women and disadvantage women in the world of work, ensuring solid legislative frameworks are in place; strengthening evidence based guidance; and investing in women's economic empowerment, all of which would strengthen economies and benefit all society.

Both the [NGO consultations](#) and the [CSW61 Youth Forum](#) provided valuable inputs and dynamism to the CSW61 deliberations and outcomes. The key messages from the NGO-CSW61 consultation just prior to the opening of the session stressed the need to reimagine the flawed economic model that was perpetuating gender inequality and repurposing it for gender equality and social justice. They insisted on the role and responsibility of the State - through macroeconomic, fiscal, social and development policies to actively create the enabling environment that serves first and foremost social justice and gender equality. The international enabling environment - aid, trade, foreign direct investment, technology policies, were also identified as critical. The role of women's organizations at all levels including grass roots and their activism on the theme was essential. They wanted the private sector to be held to account.

The Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed addressed and inspired the young women and men at the historic CSW61 Youth Forum and called upon them to work together so to ensure that young women can be whatever they want to be with nothing holding them back and called on young men to be allies and partners. She emphasized the urgency of young women's empowerment, called for action not words, and reminded them of the importance of transformation at the local level. She called upon youth to "go back to their communities and be the change agents and torchbearers the world so desperately needs."

Particularly noteworthy was that three young women read messages at the opening Plenary of the highly successful CSW Youth Forum. They emphasized the importance of SDG 5 and its implementation for their empowerment and set out a comprehensive 36-point agenda for action emphasizing that it is crucial to adopt and implement policies, resource programmes, and foster partnerships to economically empower

all young women and girls, and sensitize men and young men to embrace this and share decision making space.



The priority theme of CSW61 was **in itself a pioneering one** – ‘Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work’. Whilst women’s economic empowerment has previously been considered in various fora including the CSW, this focus on the connection between **women’s economic empowerment and the changing world of work encompassing women’s right to work and rights at work, as well as the commitment to decent work and full and productive employment, is both new and constitutes a vital area of intergovernmental norm and standard setting.** Coming after CSW60 Agreed Conclusions’ reconfirmation that women’s economic empowerment is essential for both the full, effective and accelerated implementation of Beijing Platform for Action and for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the stakes were very high.

Another context was that, beyond **closing persistent gender gaps** for women and **improving their terms of engagement in the traditional world and sectors of work, the world of work is changing rapidly at a pace not seen**

before, spurred by innovation and technology, globalization, and increasing human mobility and informality of work. This changing world of work is at the same time adversely impacted by an unprecedented jobs crisis, persistent and widespread poverty, climate change, conflicts, humanitarian, migration and refugee crises, financial and economic challenges, economic slowdown and persistent and growing inequality between and within countries. **These forces continuously shape the dynamics of the world of work, deepen extant challenges as well as present new and emerging opportunities for women’s economic empowerment through their leapfrogging into the new and green economy, ‘New Collar’ jobs and new entrepreneurship opportunities in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.**

II. Preparations

As it is a supreme institutional priority, UN Women's preparations for CSW61 have been systematic, ground up, consultative and all embracing. On the substantive preparations, the Expert Group Meeting was convened involving the participation of experts from government, civil society, and academics, in close collaboration with the ILO. A [Report of the Secretary-General on Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work](#), which examines women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work at a time when the international community has made an unprecedented commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, was the substantive basis over which the intergovernmental discussions were structured.

At the country level, and particularly at the regional level, platforms were prepared and political buy-in was secured at the very useful gender ministers' and expert level CSW regional Conferences for Africa in Addis Ababa, for Arab States in Bahrain, for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama and for Asia Pacific in Bangkok. A multi-stakeholder forum was held at UN Headquarters engaging permanent representatives and delegates of the permanent missions in New York to substantively involve them in the preparations. Civil society was engaged throughout. We also involved the private sector in different preparatory activities.

III. Analysis of the Agreed Conclusions of CSW61

The groundbreaking Agreed Conclusions of CSW61 were adopted by the Commission after over three weeks and more than 100 hours of intense and grueling negotiations among delegations supported by UN Women, with civil society including veterans and youth keeping watch and providing inspiration, insights and advocacy. **As also affirmed by the women's movement and youth, what was remarkable was that the resulting Agreed Conclusions not only held progressive ground on sensitive issues of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and family-related issues, but also secured recommitment on key aspects of the gender equality compact from previous years, built on and consolidated the gains, elaborated on the "normative of implementation" and made pathbreaking new commitments.**

In this respect the following concepts, principles, policies, measures and action recommendations constitute a veritable **Global Plan of Action for the achievement of women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work**. Moreover, the multiple ministerial, civil society and private sector dialogues led to the reimagining of the world of work in a feminist perspective which, when implemented, has the potential to bring about quantitative and qualitative shifts in mindsets, policy and practice in all countries, settings and sectors on this agenda.

The Commission committed to lead a pivotal transformation for an enabling environment that makes systemic and substantive impact on the reality of all women and girls. It would also be instrumental in engendering the world of work and transforming the destiny of the women themselves, their economies and societies. Most significantly, the Agreed Conclusions envision and committed all stakeholders to creating what we call an **Ecosystem of Strategic Enablers** that would bring about the feminist transformations for women's full, equal and effective participation, leadership and economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

CSW61 was an occasion to take stock of the why, what and how of bridging the gender gaps in the world of work decisively through the resolve, actions and investments of all stakeholders, **addressing both the**

supply side and the demand side of the labour market and related enabling environments. Governments, private sector, civil society are expected to do so in the following action categories: Strengthening normative and legal frameworks; Strengthening education, training and skills development; Implementing economic and social policies for women’s economic empowerment; Addressing the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers; Managing technological and digital change for women’s economic empowerment; Strengthening women’s collective voice, leadership and decision-making; and Strengthening private sector’s role in women’s economic empowerment.

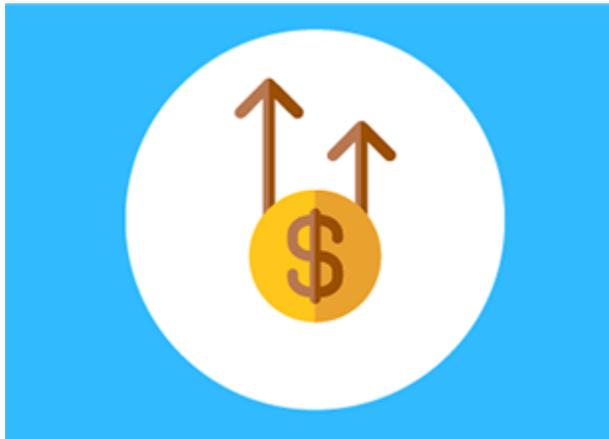


1. Gender Gaps in the World of Work

The Agreed Conclusions provided a **diagnosis of the existing and growing gender gaps and disparities** in key areas of the world of work as well as their root causes. The major gender gaps identified included those relating to wages, income, pension, social security, work force participation, recruitment, retention, promotion, re-entry, leadership, occupational segregation, burden of unpaid care work, and access to economic and productive resources, all of which were comprehensively outlined. Also, it was recognized that progress has been insufficient and that this was impeding the realization of women’s full potential and the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. **Multiple and persisting structural barriers which contribute to these gender gaps and disparities in the world of work were identified throughout, along with ways to overcome them.**

2. Human rights and labour rights including life cycle approach

CSW61 provided concrete, practical and action-oriented recommendations towards the achievement of women's economic empowerment by re-affirming and further elaborating upon the **breakthrough concept and principle of advancing women's right to work and rights at work**.



Women's human rights and fundamental freedoms were very strongly asserted throughout the text (15 references) with **universality, indivisibility and interconnections of economic, social, cultural and labour rights framing** women's economic empowerment and women's work - unpaid, paid, informal and formal. This was an important conjunction and validation that was achieved.

The theme was posited on the foundation of GEWE related norms and standards, human rights treaties and intergovernmental agreements, such as the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, along with relevant ILO conventions and labour standards**.

The essentiality of women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work was deemed variously **vital, critical, mutually reinforcing and important to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and identified as both a means and an end.

The juxtaposition of the conceptual **trinity of women's economic rights, women's economic empowerment and economic independence** with women's access to decent work and full and productive employment marks a major leap.

The **importance of the lifecycle approach** was emphasized, including regarding the enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls including women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work; in the context of poverty eradication and ensuring an adequate standard of living and social protection; about the right to education and skills development; and to decent work in new and emerging fields. All this while making clear that child labour for girls is prohibited.

3. Conditions of work for women's economic empowerment

A. Equal Pay and Living Wages

The Commission recognized the worldwide efforts in bridging gender gaps in the labour markets, and noted that additional progress may be made through temporary special measures.

The Commission expressed concern over the persistently low wages earned by women workers and the gender pay gaps which frequently prevent women from providing decent and dignified living conditions for themselves and their families. As never before, **policy recommendations** to deal with these major gender gaps **in both the formal and informal contexts** were provided. **Enacting, strengthening or**

enforcing laws and regulations that uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value in the public and private sectors was singled out as a critical measure to eliminate the gender pay gap, and effective means of redress and access to justice in cases of non-compliance should be in place.

The implementation of equal pay policies through, for example, social dialogue, collective bargaining, job evaluations, awareness raising campaigns, pay transparency, gender pay audits, certification and review of pay practices and increased availability of data and analysis on the gender pay gap were given as effective and very practical means to bridge the gender pay gap. Regrettably, the reference to enacting and enforcing minimum wage legislation was not retained though reference was indirectly made to the concept of living wage.

B. From Informal to Formal and Decent Work

The Commission expressed concern regarding **unequal working conditions, limited opportunities for career advancement, as well as the growing high incidence of informal and non-standard forms of employment for women in many regions**. As women employed in the informal economy and in less skilled work are especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, **their transition to the formal economy and their equal access to decent work and full and productive employment, and to social protection systems are especially important**.

In this regard, the Commission committed Member States to **facilitate the transition of informal workers, including those engaged in informal paid care and domestic work, home-based work and in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as work in the agricultural sector and own-account and part-time work, to the formal economy**. Actions such as the promotion of decent paid care and domestic work for women and men in the public and private sector; providing social protection and wages that allow for an adequate standard of living; promoting safe working conditions and equal pay for equal work or work of equal value as well as the occupational safety and health protection to workers in the informal economy are called for. Although there were strong references to the situation of women in the informal economy, and pathways to formalization and decent work, separate and targeted recommendations regarding women domestic workers by the Commission would have been most relevant.



C. Occupational Segregation

The Commission expressed concern about occupational segregation, **including its vertical and horizontal dimensions, in all sectors. It recognized that expanding equal opportunities for women and men in the labor market can address the root causes of segregation in working life, and empower women and men to enter professions in the public and private sectors that are dominated by the opposite sex.**

The Commission consequently **called for action to address the root causes of segregation in working life**, namely structural barriers, gender stereotypes and negative social norms, and the promotion of women's equal access to and participation in labour markets. Education and training, including greater emphasis

on STEM, and women’s full access to economic and productive resources, were **identified as measures to overcome occupational segregation and facilitate women’s full participation and integration in the formal economy and non-traditional sectors.**

D. Recruitment, Retention, Re-entry, Promotion and Progression

The Commission was clear on its specific interest in ensuring that working women have real opportunities to recruitment, retention, re-entry, promotion and progression throughout their lifecycle, to advance in the paid labour market, consolidate economic opportunities and entrepreneurial activities, as well as ensure social protection and pension benefits.

It highlighted that barriers to these opportunities be compounded by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination in the private and public spheres, and gave attention in this regard to women with disabilities.

The elimination of structural barriers and stereotypes that young women face in the transition from school to work and providing access to technical and vocational skills training, entrepreneurship development, job-matching and career guidance, including towards high wage and high growth occupations, are part of the strategies to ensure women’s advancement in the labour market and to address the challenges faced by women returning from care-related career breaks and by older women. Special mention was also made in relation to developing measures to promote re-entry of victims and survivors of violence into the labour market.

E. Gender-responsive Social Protection and Pensions



New territory was covered on the need for gender-responsive social protection, social services and care infrastructure, with a focus on equitable, quality, accessible and affordable early childhood education, child care, elder care, health care, care and social services for persons with disabilities and persons living with HIV and AIDS, which meet the needs of both caregivers and those in need of care.

Establishing or strengthening inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems, including floors, to ensure full access to social protection for all without discrimination of any kind, as well as measures to progressively achieve

higher levels of protection, including facilitating the transition from informal to formal work are posited as critical for the economic empowerment of women in the changing world of work.

Significant recommendations to the public and private sector about paid maternity, paternity and parental leave, childcare and dependent care facilities, flexible working arrangements, etc., to address the disproportionate share of unpaid care and advance its sharing and reduction were made.

The call to promote legal, administrative and policy measures that ensure women’s full and equal access to pensions, through **contributory and non-contributory schemes**, independent of women’s employment trajectories and reduction in gender gaps in benefit levels was a key value added.

4. Transforming unpaid care and domestic work

A. Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

A major normative win and key conceptual and practical point for implementation was the **commitment to addressing unpaid care and domestic work**. The Agreed Conclusions gave guidance how to concretely achieve SDG 5.4 and, going beyond, to recognize, value, reduce and redistribute women’s and girls’ disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, and provisioning of related infrastructure and care services. Moreover, unpaid care work was highlighted in terms of the caring for children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and persons living with HIV and AIDS.

Although unpaid care and domestic work has been dealt with previously, including at CSW53, **the continuum between the disproportionate burden of this work and its impact on women’s ability to realize their full potential in productive employment and the formal economy**, is the value added in these Agreed Conclusions, as is the link to SDG 5.4 implementation.



A key element in this effort is the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men and the **prioritizing of social protection policies and infrastructure development**. The Commission recognized the uneven distribution of care responsibilities as a **significant constraint on women’s and girls’ completion or progress in education, on women’s entry and re-entry and advancement in the paid labour market** and on their economic opportunities and entrepreneurial activities. It recognized that all of this can result in social protection and pension gaps.

The Commission **committed to promoting policies and initiatives** supporting the reconciliation of work and family life and the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, **through flexibility in working arrangements without reductions in labour and social protections, provision of infrastructure, technology, and public services, such as water and sanitation, renewable energy, transport, information technologies, as well as accessible, affordable and quality childcare and care facilities and by challenging gender stereotypes and negative social norms and promoting men’s participation and responsibilities as fathers and caregivers**.

The Commission called for **measuring the value of unpaid care and domestic work** to determine its contribution to the national economy, for example through periodic **time use surveys**, and for the inclusion of such measurement in the formulation of gender-responsive economic and social policies.

In the data related commitments, the measurement of unpaid care work was considered an indicator of measuring progress in achieving women’s economic empowerment.

B. Work Life Balance and Family Responsibilities

The Commission paid careful attention to balancing, and sharing work and family responsibilities, and the need to **eliminate structural barriers for women to be able to participate fully in society and equally in**

the world of work. Among measures to be taken are the strengthening of laws and regulatory frameworks that **promote the reconciliation and sharing of work and family responsibilities for women and men**, including by **designing, implementing and promoting family responsive legislation, policies and services**. When this reflection is linked to the reduction and redistribution of women and girl's disproportionate share of domestic and unpaid work and the role of men and boys, gender-responsive social protection and policies in recruitment, retention, re-entry promotion and progression, it marks an important normative progress.

5. Addressing violence and discrimination

A. Ending Violence Against Women

Another important area of normative progress in the Agreed Conclusions is the **nexus between women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work and women's fundamental right to freedom from violence**. Violence against women in all its forms was **strongly condemned, in public and private spaces including harassment and sexual harassment in the world of work**, domestic violence, femicide and harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. These were recognized as **major impediments** to women's economic empowerment and to socio-economic development that **hamper women's ability to enter, advance and remain in the job market and make contributions commensurate with their abilities**. The positive aspect that **women's economic autonomy can expand their options for leaving abusive relationships** was also highlighted.

Equally substantive are the actions proposed. Member states and stakeholders were asked to strengthen and enforce laws and policies for the elimination of violence against women of all ages in the world of work, provide means of effective redress in cases of noncompliance, address multiple consequences of violence against women and harassment, raise awareness about its costs and develop measures to promote reentry of victims and survivors into the labour market. The improvement of the security and safety of women on the journey to and from work and educational facilities, through gender-responsive rural development strategies and urban planning and infrastructure, including sustainable, safe, accessible and affordable public transportation systems, street lighting, and separate and adequate sanitation facilities, was also very well-articulated as a means to creating an enabling environment for women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

Emphasizing the **commitment to combat and eliminate all forms of trafficking in persons** as well as all forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation and forced labour, the Agreed Conclusions committed to enforcing legal frameworks as well as strengthening and implementing comprehensive and gender- and age-sensitive anti-trafficking strategies that integrate a human rights and sustainable development perspective, as well as raising public awareness of the issue of trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls.

It is worth noting that the Commission also adopted a first-ever resolution on Preventing Workplace Sexual Harassment, indicating the importance of dealing seriously with this scourge. It was adopted by consensus.

B. Addressing intersectionalities and discrimination

While the Commission recognized the contribution by different groups of women to sustainable development, their communities and their families, it was critical that it once again **stressed the multiple**

and intersecting forms of discrimination women are subject to, as well as the attitudinal barriers that hinder women’s access to and participation in the workplace on an equal basis with men. This is a key demand that needs to be addressed so to ensure that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development leaves no one behind.

Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization in relation to the world of work were highlighted, with emphasis on **indigenous, rural, migrant and refugee women as well as women with disabilities, women in conflict and post conflict, humanitarian crisis, natural and man-made disasters and under climate change impact.** Persons living with HIV and AIDs were mentioned in the context of caregiving. For the first time, the Commission recognized the important contribution of women and girls of African descent to the development of societies.



In alignment with the focus area of CSW61 on ‘The empowerment of indigenous women’, the Commission **recognized that the economic empowerment, inclusion and development of indigenous women can enable them to improve their social, cultural and civil and political engagement, achieve greater economic independence and build more sustainable and resilient communities, and noting the contribution of indigenous peoples to the broader economy.** Furthermore, the Commission committed Governments to take measures to promote the economic empowerment of indigenous women

including by **ensuring access to quality and inclusive education and meaningful participation in the economy by addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination they face and barriers, including violence,** and promote their **participation in relevant decision-making processes at all levels and in all areas,** and respecting and protecting their traditional and ancestral knowledge, and noting the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for indigenous women and girls.

As in the past, there is no direct reference to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

6. Enabler / beneficiary links with Sustainable Development Goals

The Agreed Conclusions approach the topic in a holistic and interconnected manner, making it clear that realizing women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work requires attention to the achievement and impact of key SDGs for progress. **The elaboration of the enabler - beneficiary connection of women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work to the different targets of SDG-5 and to other SDGs is thus a tremendous value added.**

SDG-5 targets of ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls, in law and practice; eliminating violence against women and girls; sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; equal participation and leadership in decision-making; are seen as both a means and an end of WEE in various ways, as well as critical links to SDG 8.5, namely “achieve full and productive employment and

decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value” were highlighted throughout. These linkages are both necessary and enabling for gender equality and sustainable development.

While SDGs and their targets are not referred to explicitly, the links to the topics of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 13, 16 and 17, to mention the most obvious, clearly inspired the assessment and recommendations in the Agreed Conclusions.

A. Poverty Eradication

As the Commission reiterated its concern that the **feminization of poverty** persists, it also acknowledged the **mutually reinforcing links** between the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the eradication of poverty, in all its forms and dimensions, and the need to ensure an **adequate standard of living for women and girls throughout their life cycle**, including through social protection systems. The Commission emphasized the **critical importance of social protection policies, and women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work in achieving these and other benefits**.

B. Food Security and Nutrition

As it recognized the **important role and contribution of rural women and girls to food security and nutrition, especially in poor and vulnerable households**, the Commission also recognized the importance of the empowerment of rural women and their full, equal and effective participation at all levels of decision-making. Equal access to agricultural technologies, through investments and transfer of technology and innovation, efforts to generate integrated and multisectoral policies that improve their productive capacity and incomes and strengthen their resilience were among the actions identified as important to address the existing gaps in and barriers rural women face in trading their agricultural products in local, regional and international markets.

C. Education, training and skills development

The value chain of education, training, lifelong learning opportunities and women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work was very well identified in terms of gaps, and what needs to be done to strengthen the transition from education to the world of work, and continuous skills building. The Commission gave very **practical guidance on what would forge women’s path to the world of work on an equal basis with men**, such as universal access to quality education (inclusive, equal and non-discriminatory), promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, eliminating gender disparities in access to and completion of all levels of education; promoting financial and digital literacy; ensuring that women and girls have equal access to career development, training, scholarships and fellowships, adopting positive actions to build women’s and girls’ leadership skills, facilitating women’s full participation and integration in the formal economy, in all aspects of development and governance at all levels. The need for expanding the **scope of education and training opportunities in, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and digital fluency** was underlined. **Gender mainstreaming in all education** was emphasized as was adopting measures to guarantee the **safety of women and girls in the school environment**.

D. Health

The Agreed Conclusions take a **remarkably holistic approach to women's and girls' enjoyment of the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health as being vital to their lives and wellbeing, to their ability to participate in private and public life, and crucial to women's economic empowerment and their full and equal participation and leadership in the economy and the world of work.** States are asked to improve access to timely, affordable and quality health care systems for women and girls through **gender-sensitive, comprehensive and targeted national strategies and public health policies and programmes.** This includes emphasis on women employed in the health and social sectors.

E. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights

The essential gain of this year is the **affirmation of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as a contribution to the fulfillment of women's economic rights, independence and empowerment.** The paragraph on SRHRR was thus a **major win with an explicit commitment to "ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights" as set out in SDG 5.6.** Although there was some disappointment that language from the Agreed Conclusions of CSW60 on SRHRR was not included in its entirety, there is no doubt that what was agreed upon last year during CSW60 continues to be relevant today.

A further added value in this year's emphasis was the combination with a commitment to universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including for family planning, information and education (SDG3.7) and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes as well the **recognition that women's human rights include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on all matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, and freedom from coercion, discrimination and violence.**

F. Access to Economic and Productive Resources

Going beyond SDG 5, a strong commitment was expressed on the economic rights of women in respect of equal access, ownership and control over economic and productive resources as well as its link to women's economic empowerment.

In this regard, the Commission stressed the need for **enacting legislation and undertaking reforms** to realize the equal rights of women and men, and where applicable girls and boys, **to access economic and productive resources**, including access to, ownership of, and control over land, property and inheritance rights, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including credit, banking and microfinance. Also, ensuring **equal access to justice and legal assistance**, and ensuring **women's legal capacity and equal rights with men to conclude contracts**, are stated as important for the realization of women's economic rights in the changing world of work.

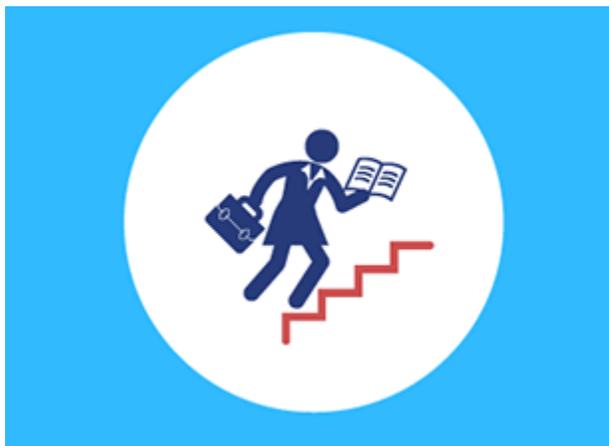
G. Climate Change

The climate change related paragraphs represent important progress. The Commission recalled the gender equality commitment in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, reiterating its concern over the challenge climate change poses to the achievement of sustainable development and that women and girls, who face inequality and discrimination, are often disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and other environmental issues, including extreme weather events.

The Commission made specific recommendations on **developing and adopting gender-responsive strategies on mitigation and adaptation to climate change, in line with international and regional instruments, to support the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls to respond to the adverse effects of climate change, with the aim to strengthen their economic empowerment, through inter alia, the promotion of their health and well-being, as well as access to sustainable livelihoods, including in the context of a just transition of the workforce.**

7. Mastering the new economies

A. Technological Change



With rapid developments in technology and opportunities created in the digital world, the Agreed Conclusions called for **managing these changes for the benefit of women and girls, by supporting women’s access, throughout their life cycle, to skills development and decent work in new and emerging fields**, by expanding the scope of education and training opportunities in **STEM and ICT and digital fluency**, and **enhancing women’s and, as appropriate, girls’ participation as users, content creators, employees, entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders**. Investment to enable women to leverage science and

technology for entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in the changing world of work is also called for.

B. Migration

As migration is one of the big and feminized phenomena in the changing world of work, a strong take away from this year’s Agreed Conclusions is the **emphasis on women migrant workers, and their positive contribution to sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination**. Expressing concern for the many migrant women, **particularly those who are employed in the informal economy and in less skilled work** and are especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, the Agreed Conclusions underlined the obligation of States to **protect the human rights of migrants, paying attention to the protection of women migrant workers in all sectors and the promotion of labour mobility**, including circular migration, in line with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. With this reference, the Commission has set an important precedent to inform the forthcoming global migration compact.

8. National enabling environment

A. Affirmative laws, policies and measures

For the above outlined issues, the Commission identified legal, policy, financial and institutional priorities for action in support of women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

- [Legal Frameworks](#)

The Commission issued a strong call for **enacting, strengthening and/or enforcing laws and regulatory frameworks that ensure equality and prohibit discrimination against women, particularly in the world of work**, including in relation to the realization of their economic rights, participation and access to labour markets, education and training, upholding the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value in the public and private sectors, and access economic and productive resources.

Connected to legislation, and much more prominently than in past Agreed Conclusions, the Commission importantly asked for **effective means of redress and access to justice in cases of non-compliance and accountability for violation and abuses of human rights**. This strong emphasis on access to justice and accountability is especially important for women in the world of work.

Laws and regulatory frameworks that promote the **reconciliation and sharing of work and family responsibilities for women and men**, including by designing, implementing and promoting family responsive legislation, policies and services, are called for.

Temporary special measures were also highlighted as a tool to close the gender gaps and ensure gender equality in the labour force including in leadership and high-level positions.

- [Gender-responsive Macroeconomic and Fiscal Policies](#)

The Commission committed to the adoption, implementation, and monitoring of the impact of, **gender-responsive macroeconomic and fiscal policies** that promote inclusive growth, women’s full and productive employment and decent work, protect women’s right to work and rights at work as well as mitigate the effects of economic recession.

- [National Priorities and Policy Space](#)

The Commission reaffirmed that **Governments have the primary responsibility for the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda at the national, regional and global levels**. The 2030 Agenda is to be



implemented in a comprehensive manner, reflecting its universal, integrated and indivisible nature, considering the different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting each country's policy space and leadership while remaining consistent with **relevant international rules and commitments, including by developing cohesive sustainable development strategies to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.**

B. Enhanced financing and investments

- **Increased Mobilization of Domestic Financial Resources**

In line with its emphasis in CSW60, the Agreed Conclusions also recommitted Member States to take steps to significantly **increase the mobilization of domestic financial resources to close resource gaps** for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, with a specific focus on accelerating the achievement of women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

- **Gender-responsive Approach to Public Financial Management**

Building on CSW60, concrete steps are expected to support and institutionalize a **gender-responsive approach to public financial management, including gender-responsive budgeting and tracking across all sectors of public expenditure**, to address gaps in resourcing for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and ensure that **all national and sectoral plans and policies for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are fully costed and adequately resourced to ensure their effective implementation.**

C. Gender responsive Institutions

- **National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**

The Commission plays a key role in advocating for the leadership of national gender equality mechanisms. Thus, the continued emphasis on their strength and power to act on this agenda is very welcome, with the Commission's call to **strengthen their authority and capacity, their positioning at the highest possible level of government with sufficient funding.** Governments are expected to **mainstream a gender perspective across all relevant national and local institutions including economic, financial and labour government agencies to ensure that national planning, decision making, policy formulation and implementation, budgeting processes and institutional structures contribute to women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.**

- **National Human Rights Institutions**

The Agreed Conclusions once again made specific reference to the relevant contribution of national human rights institutions where they exist, this time in promoting the economic empowerment of women and their full and productive employment and decent work, as well as in advancing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

D. Data, knowledge, monitoring and accountability

Improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of gender statistics and data on the formal and informal economy to measure progress for women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work received new emphasis. The Commission called for the continued development and enhancement

of standards and methodologies at national and international levels to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of gender statistics and **data on the formal and informal economy, inter alia, on women's poverty, income and asset distribution within households, unpaid care work, women's access to, control and ownership of assets and productive resources, women's participation at all levels of decision-making. The increased availability of data and analysis on the gender pay gap** were also identified as critical to measure progress for women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

The Commission promoted strengthening national statistical capacity, including by enhancing the mobilization, from all sources, of **financial and technical assistance for developing countries** to systematically design, collect and ensure access to high-quality, reliable and timely data disaggregated by sex, age, income, and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

9. International enabling environment

A conducive external environment, in support of national efforts towards the economic empowerment of women, was deemed as necessary by the Commission, an environment which includes the mobilization of adequate financial resources, capacity building, and transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms that in turn would enhance the use of enabling technologies to promote women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment.



While reaffirming the commitments made in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, pursuing policy coherence and an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels was seen as **important to close resource gaps in the gender equality work**. This included a call to take steps to significantly increase investment to close resource gaps, **including through the mobilization of financial resources from all sources**,

including public, private, domestic and international resource mobilization and allocation, and to increase priority on gender equality and the empowerment of women in official development assistance. Similarly, there is a call to ensure that official development assistance and the strengthening international cooperation, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, is used effectively, to accelerate the achievement of women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

The Commission also urged developed countries to fully implement their respective official development assistance commitments, including the commitment made by many of them to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income for official development assistance to developing countries and the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross national income for official development assistance to

least developed countries. It also encouraged developing countries to **build on the progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help meet development goals and targets and help them, inter alia, to promote women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.**

Interestingly, echoing some of the feminist sentiment, **globalization was recognized as a phenomenon which presents challenges and opportunities for women’s economic empowerment** and it was recognized that efforts must be made toward ensuring inclusive and equitable globalization for all, based on our common humanity, including women and girls and **should become an increasingly positive force for women’s economic empowerment.**

10. Mobilizing strategic partners and game changers for women’s economic empowerment in the Changing world of work

A. CSOs, Trade Unions

The Agreed Conclusions had excellent, multiple and comprehensive references to the role of civil society organizations, as stakeholders, shapers and actors in building the ecosystem for women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work. They made the strong link to recognizing the **important role of women's and community based organizations, feminist groups, women human rights defenders, and girls and youth led organizations in placing the interests, needs and visions of women and girls** on local, national, regional and international agendas including the 2030 Agenda and in promoting women’s economic empowerment and their full and productive employment and decent work, in the full effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and in the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, thus effectively expanding upon gains from CSW60.

Significant concerns were expressed by civil society at the time of the Commission’s session in relation to the shrinking of democratic spaces for civil society. In this regard, the Commission re-committed to having an **open, inclusive and transparent engagement** with them in the implementation of the measures and policies; to promote a **safe and enabling environment** for all civil society actors as well as **increased resources and support for them at all levels towards this end.**

Another important dimension was the hard-won recognition of the **role of trade unions and social dialogue in addressing gender inequalities, the gender pay gap, and consequently the need for supporting tripartite collaboration among governments, employers and trade unions and women workers and their organizations, including trade unions and other representative organizations to remove barriers to women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.** This is a very significant gain. Addressing a major lacuna, it also **encourages women's participation in trade unions, workers and employers’ organizations** and for these organizations to effectively represent women workers’ interests.

B. Role of the Private Sector

The private sector is a major employer and arena for the realization of women’s economic empowerment and therefore the Commission set out key asks on the **role and responsibilities of a gender-responsive and socially accountable private sector.**

The Commission **highly encouraged workplace environments and institutional practices that value all workers and offer them equal opportunities to reach their full potential and considered gender mainstreaming to be a necessary dimension of human resources management.** It recognized the importance of the Women’s Empowerment Principles established by UN Women and the Global Compact, for the private sector, as well as the importance of considering a gender perspective while undertaking **value chain analyses to inform the design and implementation of policies and programmes that promote and protect women’s right to work and rights at work in global value chains.**

The Commission also encouraged **women’s entrepreneurship**, including by improving access to financing and investment opportunities, tools of trade, business development, and training in order to **increase the share of trade and procurement from women’s enterprises, including micro, small and medium, cooperatives and self-help groups in both the public and private sectors.**

C. Men and Boys

The role of men and boys reinforced previous iterations. **Importantly, Member States were committed to fully engage men and boys as strategic partners and allies by designing and implementing national policies and programmes** that address the roles and responsibilities of men and boys including the equal sharing of responsibilities in caregiving and domestic work. The Commission also encouraged men and boys to engage fully as agents and beneficiaries of change with the aim to achieving the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, by **understanding and addressing the root causes of gender inequality, unequal power relations, gender stereotypes, negative social norms** as a contribution to women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

D. Young Women's Empowerment and Youth Dividend

Young women's empowerment and youth actors in engendering the world of work was centrally and deeply addressed from all sides in the Agreed Conclusions. Apart from being generically covered by references to women and girls in several contexts, young women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work was particularly highlighted in relation to **addressing structural barriers and stereotypes faced in the transition from school to work and the role of Member States in implementing policies and programmes aimed at the elimination of such structural barriers.** The Commission promoted enhancing emphasis on quality education, including communications and technology education for girls, to ensure that young women entering the labour market have opportunities to obtain full and productive employment, equitable compensation and decent work. The Commission also requested Member States to address the specific needs of young mothers by designing, and implementing and revising educational policies to allow young women to remain in and return to school.

E. Role of the Media

It was significant that the Commission recognized the important role the media can play in the achievement of gender equality and women’s economic empowerment, including through **non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive coverage and by eliminating gender stereotypes**, including those perpetuated by commercial advertisements; and **encourage training** of those who work in the media and the **development and strengthening of self-regulatory mechanisms to promote balanced and non-stereotypical portrayals of women and girls**, which contribute to the empowerment of women and girls and the elimination of discrimination against and exploitation of women and girls.

F. The Role of the United Nations and UN Women

While taking note of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, the Commission called upon the United Nations system entities, within their respective mandates, to support States in their efforts to achieve women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

ILO’s role was implicitly recognized in the references to ILO core conventions and standards, the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work as well as the decent work agenda, which needs to be upheld for the realization of women’s right to work and rights at work and that are critical for women’s economic



empowerment. UN Women will continue to leverage its strong partnership with ILO to advance their common goal on achieving women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

UN-Women was called upon to continue to play a central role in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and in supporting governments and national women’s machineries, upon their request, in coordinating the United Nations system and in mobilizing civil society, the private sector, employers’ organizations and trade unions and other relevant stakeholders, at all levels, in support of the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda towards women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

11. Conclusion

With the adoption of the CSW61 Agreed Conclusions by consensus, a strong sense of accomplishment, progress and sense of purpose was obvious. The exemplary role of the CSW61 Chair, Ambassador Antonia de Aguiar Patriota of Brazil and of facilitator of the Agreed Conclusions related negotiations, Fatma Al Zahraa Hassan of Egypt were to truly be recognized and applauded.

Several countries and groups of countries voiced their satisfaction with the results achieved, highlighting a range of gains they considered to be especially timely and pertinent, and a strong basis for follow-up action. There was also disappointment about areas where not enough progress was made. And finally, several interpretive statements were made indicating countries’ understanding of the content of the Agreed Conclusions or of specific paragraphs.

As the analysis of CSW61 Agreed Conclusions makes clear, the veritable Global Plan of Action and the Ecosystem of the Strategic Enablers is a formidable achievement in our journey to a Planet 50/50 on women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work, and in its feminist transformation. We are very pleased that civil society and the youth assessments have reinforced this take away. This is despite persisting and new geopolitical challenges and pushback. Of course, it was clear that this has redoubled the resolve of the champion countries and NGOs to push forward with a progressive agenda on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

We must now disseminate widely this outcome of CSW61 and its significance for the larger GEWE cause as well as sustainable development, human rights and peace and security projects, among all stakeholders – governments, corporate sector, civil society, academia, media, young women and men, and faith-based organizations. Our advocacy must also strongly support Member States’ implementation of these commitments at all levels. We must contribute to strengthening the data and knowledge hub, build accountability, engage in advocacy campaigns including thematic ones such as that on equal pay, mobilize the UN system and work with ILO and the 'game changers' for movement building on women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

IV. Participation and outreach

This year’s 61st session saw some of the highest numbers in terms of participation of Member States, and of organization of meetings and events. Representatives from 162 Member States, including 89 ministers, and more than 3900 civil society participants from more than 580 organizations and 138 countries attended the session. Additionally, NGOs had submitted 131 written statements to the Commission. A combined number of more than 600 events were hosted by Member States, UN entities and civil society on the side-lines of the two-week session; approximately 200 took place on UN premises while roughly 400 were staged within the proximity of the UN compound.

Our advocacy and communications outreach before, during and after the CSW61 as well in the context of the International Women’s Day (IWD) made big waves and had wide impact – online and offline. Overall, 53 country offices reported a total of 134 IWD events in 2017. Almost 4,000 media reports in 90 countries covered IWD and CSW. On social media, we reached a whopping 1.2 billion users on IWD and some 170 million during CSW. Video and photo views in March reached an all-time high with almost 2 million video views on Facebook, 420,000 on YouTube and over 400,000 on Flickr. Our website unwomen.org saw some 800,000 unique visitors in March.

V. Civil society movement building

On the margins of CSW61, for the first time in the CSW’s history, a Secretary-General’s Town Hall meeting with civil society, moderated by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, was organized. It aimed at discussing the challenges, opportunities and the way forward to ensure gender equality and women’s empowerment, including how the UN can deliver on its own commitments on gender equality.

Many of the side events, including the launch of the Equal Pay Platform of Champions, the *‘the personal is political’* short films series, and panel discussions on the role of men and boys and faith actors in challenging stereotypes and addressing social



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norms on women’s role in the workplace, among others, were important opportunities for UN Women to engage broad constituencies and work together towards achieving a transformative cultural change.

ED’s first formal meeting of her newly formed ED’s Civil Society Advisory Group as well as with the Women’s Rights Caucus were the occasion for UN Women to restate its commitment to promote a global dialogue and an inclusive space for civil society at the UN and encourage Member States to support and protect feminist movements at national and local levels.

UN Women, in collaboration with other partners, launched a global Platform on “Gender Equality and Religion” which aims to build a unique approach of combining gender equality and faith-based principles to boost the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Platform convenes faith-based organizations and civil society groups, bringing together religious leaders and development experts to find ways to effectively pursue the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

UN Women co-organized a side event on empowering indigenous women with the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Indigenous Women Global Forum. In attendance was the Chairperson of CSW61--His Excellency Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota and various indigenous women's institutions and representatives. UN Women also participated in a side event at the instance of the Government of Norway on the theme: " Indigenous peoples’ cultural heritage: Indigenous peoples' participation and the role of indigenous women in promoting cultural heritage".

At these events UN Women introduced its Strategy on Visibility and Inclusion of Indigenous Women and effectively articulated its pledge to support member states in legal and policy initiatives to promote the principle of leave no one behind in the context of indigenous women and girls. These in conjunction with the focus theme of CSW on the Empowerment of Indigenous Women provided a unique occasion for UN Women to identify good practices and lessons learned for strengthening our work targeting indigenous women as well as in mainstreaming their concerns, wisdom and achievements into the broader gender equality agenda.

