2018 Women’s Empowerment Principles Forum

CONCEPT NOTE

Thursday, 15 March 2018, 3-6 pm
ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations Headquarters

BACKGROUND

Empowering women to participate fully in economic life is essential to building stronger economies and improving the quality of life for women, men, families and communities. The private sector has a central and active role to play in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the spirit of the private sector’s crucial role in advancing SDG5 (Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment), UN Women, UN Global Compact and UN Office of Partnership are jointly organizing the 2018 Women’s Empowerment Principles Forum. Around 600 leaders, experts and advocates from governments, private sector, academia and civil society are expected to attend. The Forum will provide a platform for presenting ongoing, successful business initiatives to advance gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community, and identify private sector initiatives that could be scaled up and replicated to accelerate the implementation of the Women’s Empowerment Principles.

Making progress is about how we all choose to do business and how we reflect principles of equality on an everyday level, so that they permeate our cultures, values, performance and business practices. Companies can make gains in productivity, competitiveness and innovation by developing policies and practices to recognize women’s rights and improve gender equality at the workplace, marketplace and community.

The objectives of this half-day Forum are to:

- Build awareness of business innovations that accelerate women’s empowerment and have a real impact on the quality of life for women, men, families and communities, particularly in rural areas.
- Identify key strategies and actions to transform investments for gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Drive WEPs commitments, transformative change in the workplace, marketplace and community and promote strategic partnerships between the United Nations, the private sector and other stakeholders for around women’s economic empowerment.

FORMAT

The Forum will be organized in six sessions and two keynote speeches:

1. OPENING SESSION

The WEPs Forum will be opened by Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, H.E. Mrs. Geraldine Byrne Nason, CSW62 Chair and Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, and Ambassador Mara Marinaki, Principle Adviser on Gender and the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, European Union.
2. **FIRESIDE CHAT**

The fireside chat will be moderated by the Mistress of Cermonies: Laura Trevelyen, BBC Anchor/Correspondents, and feature Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General of United Nations and UN Women Executive Director, and Lise Kingo, Executive Director of UN Global Compact.

3. **PANEL I: Innovation and Infrastructure for and by rural women**

This panel session will raise issues of how technology, innovation and infrastructure can be more inclusive of rural women and can advance their rights, empowerment and participation in the rural economy. Rural women are key agents for achieving the transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. Unless concerted policies and initiatives are enacted and investments made in building new skills for women, there is a risk that women could lose out on the opportunities of adopting such new technologies, risking a widening of the gender gap, particularly in rural areas.

4. **PANEL II: Transforming Investment for gender equality**

This session will explore opportunities for gender-lens investing through the Women’s Empowerment Principles to expand the reach and scale impact for gender equality and women’s empowerment. Estimates indicate that USD5–7 trillion annually is needed to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. The financing gap to achieve SDG5 depending on the country can be as high as 90%. The call for private sector finance and investments to complement public sector funds has never been louder and new financial products and investment vehicles, such as gender-lens investing, are emerging and gaining traction.

5. **PANEL III: The Future of work**

This session will analyze changes which are fundamentally altering the job market, including the type of jobs that will exist in the future and the skills that would be required for those jobs. Some 50% of the jobs in the current market will no longer exist in a few years due primarily to these rapid advances in innovation and technology. With nearly one billion women entering the global economy in the next decade, they risk of losing out on tomorrow’s best job opportunities due to gender-based discrimination, stereotypes and social and cultural norms. Similarly, diverse challenges in the informal workforce could be even wider, while also creating and strengthening challenges of decent work opportunities, paternal leave among others in the formal workforce. How is this going to impact women, and what can companies do to help them?

6. **KEYNOTE ADDRESSES**

The two keynote speeches will be delivered by: Padma Lakshmi, Author, actress, model, television host and executive producer; and Patricia Greene, Director, Women’s Bureau, US Department of Labour.

7. **CLOSING SESSION**

The WEPs Forum will be closed by Anna Falth, head of the WEPs Secretariat at UN Women.

**COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

A joint Communication and Social Media kit will be developed to promote the event (prior, during and post-meeting). The hashtag to be used #2018WEPsForum.