

29.10 (15:00)

Closing the gender gaps in labour markets, entrepreneurship, social protection and services.

Madam Chair,

Madam Moderator ,

Excellencies.

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I first convey my thanks for the opportunity to share some experience of Azerbaijan . The achievement of equality between women and men has become an integral part of the development agenda in the country. The Government believes that economic independence of women facilitates poverty reduction, ensures advancement of women's economic and social performance and in many cases contributes to elimination of gender based discrimination. Within the framework of implementation of a number of state programs it has been possible to achieve significant progress in reduction of unemployment rate, strengthening the social protection of the unemployed and socially vulnerable groups of the women.

The development of strategic roadmaps with gender components on main economic sectors, adoption of several steps towards the liberalization of business environment, improvement of tax, as well as the establishment of special public legal entities like “ Asan Support for Family Business”, the National Fund for Entrepreneurship Support, the Agency for Development of SMEs ,facilitate the creation of additional employment opportunities for population and development of small and medium entrepreneurship in rural areas .

Serious steps are taken in the country to digitize services for citizens to ensure the modern and flexible governance and facilitate women's access to these services. In this context, several additional measures are undertaken to transit fully to electronic public services in area of labor, employment, social protection and social allowances that helps to develop transparency and swift delivery of public services. The State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan has started to provide over 20 mobile services. This has created favorable conditions for the population including the women residing in remote areas to benefit from the services offered. The State institutions provide e-

services via ASAN Service centers, which also have special child care facilities where women can leave their children and benefit from the public services.

In accordance with the implementation of the Decree of the President “on additional measures to ensure population’s self-employment “, a number self-employment programs are carried out to ensure self-employment of people. Since 2018, within the framework of the implementation of the “Decent Work Country Program for the years 2016–2020”, and the “Pilot subsidy program on expanding the opportunities for decent employment of youth” about 1400 family households have succeeded in implementing their business ideas.

The Law “On Insurance against Unemployment” adopted in 2017, has been directed to strengthening the social protection of the unemployed and job seeking citizens in the country. This Law provides a wide range of opportunities for activities in the field of applied professional training, the organization of public works, the labour fairs, and wide application of self-employment projects and legalization of labor relations.

Development of women’s skills, reorganization of the professional development system and adaptation of trainings to the labor market requirements, expand decent work opportunities and increase workforce competitiveness for women These policies are intended to ensure inclusive employment and strengthen the integration of socially vulnerable population groups to the labor market.

Formation of unemployment insurance system, developing the labor market monitoring and numerous programs assist to increase employment and well-being of women. For example, a two-years jointly funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, UNDP and UNFPA programme is aimed on improvement the livelihoods and well-being of up to 3,000 women with disabilities. This programme, developed at the initiative of the First Vice-President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, will help the Government produce gender and age-disaggregated data on disability and allow designing inclusive policies for the employment of women and girls with disabilities. It is fostering positive attitudes and perceptions to eliminate stigma and discrimination towards vulnerable population groups and provide an accessible and inclusive environment for personal and professional growth. A new state-of the art Virtual Skills Development and Training Lab (V-Lab) has been launched for women with disabilities offering them access to knowledge, information and employment opportunities through the use of modern ICT. A model art school has been

established to promote social inclusion and offer a wide range of innovation start-up and business development platforms to women and girls with disability.

The Government has also taken measures to challenge prevalent gender stereotypes related to the choice of jobs and to encourage women to be involved in non-traditional fields and technology. Taking into account that using digital devices is crucial to ensure equal access to information and knowledge, as well as to foster innovation and entrepreneurial thinking, the Special Education Centers have been launched in the country. Newly created Technology Parks are actively used in the framework of awareness raising campaigns on importance of information technology, the crucial role of education in the fields of engineering, science and telecommunications. A number of projects were implemented for increasing percentage of the women entrepreneurs and women in ICT.

Several researches have been conducted in the country: «Special Economic Mapping and Labour Market Assessment and «Gender Assessment: Analyzing barriers to economic and social participation of women and girls». It helped us to review the context of local economic development, the assessment of employment opportunities for women and women's needs and concerns on labor market and analyze reasons, preventing women and girls from accessing employment opportunities in the private sector.

Government holds meetings with the private sector and banks to sensitize them to gender specific needs and initiate dialogue between the businesses and civil society activists to promote women's rights. Special trainings on the «Development of policies in the area of economic empowerment and community-based activism of young women are conducted for the staff of local executive authorities, representatives of trade unions, private sector enterprises.

In the framework of the joint project with UNDP on «Promoting Rural Women's participation in the Social and Economic Life», rural women improved their skills in the field of accounting, financial literacy, marketing and product's promotion, computer science, fundraising, proposal writing and organizational development. Women's Resource Centers were created as the mechanism for disseminating knowledge and network building among economically active women residing in rural and sub-urban settlements. These Centers strengthen efforts in addressing the needs and concerns of rural women in the area of economic and social participation.. They offer women and girls free access to library resources, internet, computers, trainings and etc. An impressive network of more than 3000 rural women was created through these centers. Totally, 6 thousand rural women benefited from the project and have been provided with capacity development

support, 150 women started the entrepreneurship activity, and 300 women were provided with jobs.

Within the scope of the project «Capacity Development Support to Rural Women on the Socio-economic and Gender Aspects of Sustainable Rural Development», gender-sensitive needs assessment has been done , training that targets the specific needs and priorities of rural women, especially on promoting empowerment of rural women, food security and livelihoods were provided.

The Ministry of Agriculture, together with FAO have started to implement “Agro Action of Azerbaijani Women” project to increase women's employment in agro sphere, their access to information, resources and markets, and thus improve their socio-economic wellbeing. The main objective of the project is to facilitate the access of women to the sales markets, forming women entrepreneurs in the field of agriculture. In the framework of the Azerbaijani Rural Investment Project (ARIP) implemented by the State Agency for Agricultural Projects and Loans Management 100 women established new businesses in 2018. Project has used the funds in the amount of 140 million US dollars. 200 micro projects, including restoration of rural roads, potable water supply, exhibition centers and creation of business incubators have been implemented successfully.

Taking into the consideration that private sector could be a key partner in efforts to advance gender equality and empower women; we encourage private enterprises to serve as opinion leaders in term of Women’s Empowerment Principles. A number of large companies in the country supply marketing practices that empower women and promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.

Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, families and communities. Good partnership with all state agencies, Executive Authorities who knows the challenges women face in the regions, municipalities ,private sector and international organizations ,provides opportunities for productive economic engagement of women, ensure that women, particularly the poor and socially excluded are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making. So we encourage all stakeholders to join hands to increase women’s participation in all sectors of the economy, including at managerial levels.

Thank you for attention.