

Excerpt from the Report of the Third UNECE International PPP Forum

“Scaling up: Meeting the challenges of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through people-first Public-Private Partnerships”

7 - 9 May 2018, Palais des Nations, Geneva

High Level Debate

How can the private sector help to empower women through PPPs

In the PPP sector (e.g. construction and heavy infrastructure, public services etc.) the industry is not as dynamic as it should be, because women are playing only a limited role. The UNECE “Guiding Principles on people-first PPPs for the UN SDGs” expressly state that the people-first PPP projects should include the following four-point strategy for projects’ economic effectiveness:

1. Enhance the role of women inside companies at senior-decision taking levels, undertaking PPPs and in the PPPs themselves;
2. Help women- led companies in the supply chain compete in tenders for projects;
3. Make a difference in the communities where they do business, by helping young women and train them to become the business leaders of the future; and
4. Promote a gender perspective in the design and operational stage of the delivery of projects, so that these help women deal with their special challenges



The panel was moderated by **Sharanjit Leyl**, Producer and Presenter, BBC World News, and was composed of high level panellists including: **Arancha González**, Executive Director, International Trade Centre; **Simona Scarpaleggia**; CEO, IKEA Switzerland; **Anne Hornung-Soukup**, Chair of the Board, Transports Publics Genevois (TPG), Switzerland; **Sonia Mezzour**, Secretary General, AMEE, Morocco; and **Xi Wang**, Deputy Secretary General, Industry Rules Committee of Beijing Lawyers Association. **Olga Algayerova**, the UNECE Executive Secretary, made concluding remarks at the end of the high-level debate. The panel addressed the following key questions:

i. What is the current situation in the infrastructure sector and what are the types of jobs that women do?

The panellists recognised that the overall gap of women's participation in the economy is a collective problem in society. Some key statistics were highlighted as follows:

- Only 1% of women-owned businesses contributes to the global public procurement volume, representing a total of USD15 trillion.
- One billion women is disconnected from the economy. Only 1 of 5 exporting companies is a women-owned business.
- Payment gaps are likewise a very important concern. For instance, the finance sector has the second largest payment gap between men and women in the world.



However, women add significant value to the economy. For instance, it was argued that companies where women comprised at least 15 percent of senior management boards were 50 percent more profitable, in comparison to others with less women participation.

ii. Should the industry give more opportunities to women to participate and make it more dynamic and successful?

Gender inequality is the starting issue to be solved in the economy. By increasing women participation in different value chain activities, global GDP could substantially increase. Women participation is both a human right and societal issue.

Some infrastructure sectors such as transportation are typically male-oriented due to the use of heavy machinery in the sector. A favourable environment for women (e.g. codes of conduct) should be introduced in companies. Measurable targets for women inclusion in leadership positions are already being followed by a number of large companies and organizations to drive gender equality. Gender-balanced recruiting processes, flexibility, and parity of salaries can drive more productivity in companies.

Coaching, mentoring and capacity building are likewise good strategies for industries to build up women skills and help them advance in their careers and in the labour market.

iii. How can infrastructure companies and governments better work together to give women concrete chances to further advance their career at all stages?

The panel recognised that governments might wish to introduce regulations that promote women participation, and for the private sector to act more vigorously in enhancing women's economic empowerment.



Women's access to infrastructure is highly relevant. Involving women-led companies in decision-making processes is an important aspect to achieve the SDGs and promote People-First PPPs.

All panellists agreed that commitment from both governments and private sector stakeholders is required to achieve a more gender-inclusive economy, with a set of concrete targets. Market intervention is for this reason required to make progress on gender equality, while tackling social, societal and cultural

issues.

In addition, creating a gender-balanced pipeline of talents among both public and private sectors is extremely important. Efforts by all stakeholders to drive cultural changes, promote education and allow transparency of gender-related data are required to promote inclusion and empowerment of women.

Actions arising and follow up

- An international roadshow will be organized to sensitize companies and encourage them to empower women in their economic activities.
- In addition, the speakers made concrete pledges towards further empowering women in the work place within their respective organisation:
 - **Arancha González**, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, pledged to connect 3 million women to the market by 2030.
 - **Anne Hornung-Soukup**, Chair of the Board of TPG Geneva took a commitment to double the number of women in senior positions within her company and reach 20 percent within four years.
 - **Olga Algayerova**, Executive Secretary, UNECE, remarked that there was a need to improve the representation of women inside the companies undertaking PPPs. She also highlighted the importance of having targets and concluded by launching one: “let us look to recruit in the next three years 1000 companies meeting our goals and showing results on the ground, inspiring others to do more.”
 - **Sonia Mezzour**, with the support of the Government of Morocco, will take the lead to support the launch of a programme to promote women empowerment in PPP projects.