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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Gender-responsive standards initiative (GRSI)

Report on Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative activities 2019-2020

Submitted by the secretariat

Summary

In 2016, Working Party 6 created the *Gender Responsive Standards Initiative* with the aim of improving gender balance in standards development, and ensuring that the content and impact of standards, when implemented, are gender-responsive. This document reports on the progress in the work of the Initiative.

Proposed decision:

The Working Party adopts the report on the Gender Responsive Standards Initiative. It commends the opening of the Declaration on Gender Responsive Standards for signature. It encourages member States to engage in dialogue with standards bodies in their jurisdiction, so they also become signatories. It further requests the secretariat to continue its awareness-raising efforts and to report on activities at the next session.

I. Mandate of the initiative

1. During the 26th Plenary Session of the ECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (Working Party 6), member States agreed to give a mandate to the Bureau and the secretariat to initiate consultations on developing a roadmap and a Recommendation on mainstreaming gender into standards and regulatory policies at national and international levels (Decision 4), with particular reference to:

- Enhance the use of standards and technical regulations as tools for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 5;
- Mainstream a gender perspective in the development and implementation of standards; and
- Mainstream a gender perspective in the development and enforcement of technical regulations.

2. The activities were undertaken within the context of the ECE Strategic Framework for the period 2016-2017 and 2018–2019.¹ Further, the project responds to United Nations Economic and Social Council resolutions no. 2011/5² and no. 2013/16³.

II. Background of the Initiative

3. Investing in women’s economic empowerment creates exponential growth as well as sets a path towards gender equality, economic independence, and the development of gender-sensitive policy and programs.

4. Whilst many international commitments support women’s economic empowerment, the world’s female labour participation rate (per cent of female population aged 15+) stood at only 48.5% in 2018 – 26.5% below that of men. Since 1990, the participation gap has narrowed by only 2%, representing a major hindrance to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁴

5. In a number of fields, standards represent a subtle yet important barrier to the participation of women in economic sectors that have become de facto male-dominated. Additionally, as all products and services are designed to specifications contained in standards, a failure to explicitly analyse the needs of the different genders may result in reduced usability or an increased price of products that would otherwise contribute to freeing up women’s time. Such adaptation, were it to be more systematic, would decrease the burden of domestic chores, enabling women who are traditionally responsible for these tasks to seek and retain paid positions in the formal sector or pursue a formal education.

6. The insufficient focus of standardization activities at all levels – sectoral, national, regional and international – on the needs of women can be surmised from two observations:

- (a) The very small share of women involved in standard-setting activities. ECE has preliminarily estimated that as little as 10 per cent of standards development experts are women. This may affect the way in which standards are produced and the focus of standardization activities more broadly; and
- (b) No overall gender strategy currently exists in the standardization field and none of the major standards setting bodies has yet:
 - (i) Adopted an official gender strategy for the organization of their internal activities;

¹ See documents A/69/6 and A/71/6 available at <https://www.unece.org/info/open-unece/programme-planning-and-reporting.html> in particular as regards para 17 “Due consideration will be given to the gender dimension of development. (...) Gender equality and the empowerment of women will be integrated in ECE sub-programs in accordance with the United Nations System-wide Action Plan.”

² “The role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women.”

³ “Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programs in the United Nations system.”

⁴ See : International Labour Organization, ILO, “World Employment Social Outlook 2018”.

(ii) Prioritized gender in the planning or adaptation of its standardization activities; and

(iii) Developed a tool for the analysis of existing standards through a gender lens.

7. Standards are not only valuable in informing management decisions in business, they are also used as precursors in the development of regulations and form the basis for a large range of social and economic policies. As such, the lack of a gender lens in the development of standards is poised to result in gender blind societal choices, which will result in their further exclusion of women and the further decrease in their participation in the workforce.

III. Main achievements of the initiative until 2020

8. In 2016, Working Party 6 created the Gender Responsive Standards Initiative, with the aim of improving gender balance in standards development, and of ensuring that the content and impact of standards, when implemented, are gender-responsive.

9. In 2017, the initiative held a first physical meeting, followed by five online meetings, where participants exchanged information and best practice. These included presentations on: gender bias in standardisation offered by WorkSafe;⁵ Gender-Based Analysis Plus delivered by State of Women Canada;⁶ a certification system for workplace gender equality provided by EDGE;⁷ two state labels introduced by AFNOR;⁸ the Gender Equality Seal Certification Program for the Private Sector from UNDP⁹, training materials and tools on gender mainstreaming offered by UN Women Training Centre;¹⁰ a project by the Réseau Normalisation et Francophonie aimed at ensuring better integration of women and girls into the formal economy through the usage and uptake of standards;¹¹ and a tool developed by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to analyse gender implications of technical regulations (APEC's Guide on Gender Analysis¹²).

10. In 2018, the initiative held four online meetings and one physical meeting resulting in the finalization of the Declaration for Gender Responsive Standards. This Declaration was embedded in the Recommendation U which was unanimously approved and adopted at the Twenty-Eight session of the Working Party in November 2018.

11. The online meetings were also the occasion for the exchange of best practice among participants. This included presentations on: the Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) Database from the International Trade Centre, aimed at assisting enterprises, governments as well as other organizations and institutions in analysing and dealing with diverse voluntary sustainable standards;¹³ the Gender Inclusion Guidelines developed by APEC, whose

⁵ https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/wp6/AreasOfWork/GenderInitiative/presentations/NZ_Worksafe_Gender_Bias_in_Standardization_V2.pdf.

⁶ https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/wp6/AreasOfWork/GenderInitiative/presentations/SWC-CFC-PRESENTATION_UNECE_general_overview_GBA_training_and_tools_Oct_23_2017.pdf.

⁷ https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/wp6/documents/2017/Gender/EDGE_VFinal.pdf.

⁸ <https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/wp6/documents/2017/Gender/AFNOR.pdf>.

⁹ https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/wp6/documents/2017/Gender/UNDP_PPT_Analysis_of_Standards_through_a_Gender_Lengths.pdf.

¹⁰ [trainingcentre.unwomen.org](https://www.trainingcentre.unwomen.org).

¹¹ https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/wp6/AreasOfWork/GenderInitiative/presentations/Projet_FJN_RNF_description_sommaire_19_cellules_EN.PDF.

¹² https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/wp6/AreasOfWork/GenderInitiative/presentations/APEC_Gender_Inclusion_Guidelines.pdf

¹³ https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/wp6/AreasOfWork/GenderInitiative/presentations/ITC_T4SD_Overview_Gender_related_standards_25.01.pdf.

purpose is promoting gender integration in all fora and committees across the organization, while aiming at progressing gender-related expertise in all APEC work areas;¹⁴ and the Equal Wage Management System Standard IST 185 introduced by Iceland, with the aim of creating a system that would ensure equality in payment and working conditions of both men and women working for the same employer¹⁵.

12. In 2019, WP.6 successfully opened the Declaration on Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development for signature on 14 May 2019. Over Fifty-six organizations signed the Declaration on the opening day. The event was broadcast live on UN TV and actively promoted in Twitter and Facebook. It was held as a no-fly event to limit carbon emissions and limit adverse impacts on climate. The unedited long-form video of the event is available through UN TV¹⁶ and a promotional event video¹⁷ & animation¹⁸ were developed for awareness-raising purposes. Numerous signatories (e.g. ASTM International¹⁹, ISO²⁰, IEC²¹, African Organization for Standardization²², Standards Council Canada²³, the Bureau of Indian Standards²⁴) submitted videos which celebrated the Declaration and highlighted the commitment of the respective organisations to pursue gender equality in standards and standards development. Presently over seventy organizations have signed the Declaration.

13. Finally, the Secretariat worked with several partners to increase the visibility of the Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative resulting in greater coverage of gender responsive standards and the Declaration being more broadly understood and discussed in articles.

IV. Activities of the initiative in 2020, deliverables for the annual session, and plans for 2021

14. The main achievement of the Gender Responsive Standards Initiative in the current reporting period was the further development of the Declaration signatory network and the formulation of three expert working groups. WP.6 added 20 signatories to the Declaration on Gender Responsive Standards & Standards Development in 2020. These include: the Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries (SMIIC), the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS), the Rwandan Standards Board²⁵, WOCAN (Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management), Fairtrade International (press release²⁶, Fairtrade Int. press release²⁷), the Georgian National Agency for Standards and Metrology (GeoSTM), Papua New Guinea's National Institute of

¹⁴ https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/wp6/AreasOfWork/GenderInitiative/presentations/APEC_Gender_Inclusion_Guidelines.pdf.

¹⁵ http://www.kvenrettindafelag.is/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/The-Equal-Pay-Standard-%C3%8DST-85-www.vel_is_.pdf.

¹⁶ <http://webtv.un.org/watch/opening-of-declaration-on-gender-responsive-standards-and-standards-development/6036564687001/>

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEVKa1IBXSI>

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4I-PKQOAGxM&list=PL4iZR0KyjSQ-mXHZRBXm9faFtZKGZKZoM&index=2>

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjimIT6xSLE>

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGbtWUe4b1k>

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pej3T94KdBw>

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnGvhAtpZGg>

²³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH1HpMVAYUs>

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHg5P-YyAsw>

²⁵ <https://www.rsb.gov.rw/index.php?id=8>

²⁶ <http://www.unece.org/?id=54404>

²⁷ <https://www.fairtrade.net/news/fairtrade-international-signs-the-unece-declaration-for-gender-responsive-standards-and-standards-development>

Standards and Industrial Technology (NISIT), Argentina's Instituto Argentino de Normalización y Certificación (IRAM) and Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas (the Brazilian National Standards Organization), the Responsible Jewellery Council (press release²⁸), Mauritius Standards Bureau, Bureau des Normes de Madagascar and Standards Institution of Israel (SII).

15. Current signatories include international organizations: ISO, IEC, ITU, regional organizations: CEN/CENELEC, the African Organization for Standardization (ARSO), as well as 70 national standards bodies and other organizations. The list of signatories as of 21 August 2020 is provided in Annex 1.

16. To support Declaration signatories to develop gender action plans and cultivate the expert knowledge of the standards experts of the GRSI, we have created three Working Groups: 1 (Knowledge Sharing & Best Practice, led by Lucy He of Worksafe New Zealand), 2 (Gender Responsive Standards Methodology, led by Gabrielle White and Michelle Parkouda of Standards Council Canada) and 3 (GRSI Network Development, led by Ray Walsh of Dublin City University). Composed of – but not limited to – members of the Gender Responsive Standards Initiative, the Working Groups will work in parallel to the GRSI. Each of the Group leaders will finalise a plan of action, agree a timetable of deliverables and assume responsibility to report to UNECE WP.6 and the GRSI. All training, analytical tools (i.e. gender methodology) and best practice will be made available without restriction.

17. WP.6 met representatives of Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in Berlin (January 2020) to discuss 'Standards for the SDGs', gender-responsive standards and the identification of gender-related examples.

18. Joint article published ('Personal Protective Equipment Standards must Respond to Women's Needs to Ensure the Safety of all Frontline Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic') (UNECE publication²⁹, UN Women publication³⁰). Article by UNECE Executive Secretary and UN Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia Alia El -Yassir. Published via UNECE and UN Women social media channels.

19. Online event on 'Re-Tooling for Sustainability' (19th March 2020). The session was co-organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, with the support of the Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany in Geneva. (Press release³¹). The session allowed participants to share best practice in developing and implementing gender responsive standards and tracking progress on the contribution of Standards to the SDGs. Further, it provided an opportunity to discuss bottlenecks and opportunities for women's full and effective participation in decision-making and for policy-makers uptake of international, regional and national standards. Meeting minutes and a video³² of the online event are available.

- Presentations were made by: Alia El -Yassir, UN Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia; Justin Wilkes, Executive Director of the European Environmental Citizens' Organization for Standardization (ECOS); Sibylle Gabler, Director, Government Relations, Standards Body of Germany (DIN e. V.); Bilel

²⁸ <https://www.responsiblejewellery.com/rjc-signs-un-gender-responsive-standards-declaration/>

²⁹ <https://www.unece.org/info/media/executive-secretary-blog/2020/personal-protective-equipment-standards-must-respond-to-womens-needs-to-ensure-the-safety-of-all-frontline-workers-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/doc.html>

³⁰ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/6/op-ed-eca-alia-el-yassir-ppe-standards-must-respond-to-womens-needs>

³¹ <http://www.unece.org/info/media/news/trade/2020/a-higher-standard-global-tools-for-the-empowerment-of-women-girls/doc.html>

³² <https://vimeo.com/399210375>

Jamoussi, Chief, Study Groups Department, ITU Standardization Bureau; Andrijana Velevska, State Advisor for Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, North Macedonia

20. WP.6 discussed gender responsive standards at virtual meetings convened by UNIDO ('Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Bridging the Standardisation Gap'³³, 15th May 2020) and conversEU ('Discussing COVID 19: European Challenges and Opportunities', May 28th 2020).

21. A social media campaign was launched to celebrate International Women's Day (8th March 2020) together with Declaration Gender Responsive Standards Postcards for social media. Disseminated through NSB social media channels including: CEN CENELEC³⁴, the Bureau of Indian Standards³⁵, ASTM International³⁶, Thai Industrial Standards Institute, Standards Council Canada³⁷, the European Environmental Citizens' Organization for Standardisation (ECOS)³⁸. Activities such as these have increased awareness of the Initiative and resulted in coverage of gender responsive standards in the following: UPS ('Women in Trade Can Reinvigorate the WTO and Global Economy'³⁹, May 2020), ISO ('UNECE Gender Declaration: One Year On'⁴⁰ May 2020); IISD ('Fair Trade Standards Organization Joins Gender-Responsive Standards Declaration'⁴¹, May 2020); Modern Diplomacy ('A higher standard: Global tools for the empowerment of women & girls'⁴², March 2020); Bureau of Indian Standards ('Gender Responsive Standards – a vital benchmark of a progressive society'⁴³, March 2020) ANSI ('U.S. Stakeholders for Joint Strategic Advisory Group (JSAG) on Gender Responsive Standards Sought'⁴⁴, 23rd March 2020); Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council, GJEPC India ('RJC Underlines its Commitment to Gender Equality: Signs UN Gender Responsive Standards Declaration'⁴⁵, 21st Feb 2020).

22. Gender Responsive Standards Trello⁴⁶ board developed. The Trello board contains the following focus areas: best practice, outreach & capacity building; reference materials; ongoing activities; GRSI meeting reports and presentations; and GRSI regular WebEx meetings.

23. Going forward, WP.6 will work with national standards bodies (e.g. the Spanish Association for Standardization, UNE) to map standards to Sustainable Development Goal 5 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and support the delivery of trainings on gender responsive standards. The Initiative will continue to work with Signatories to develop their

³³ <https://tii.unido.org/news/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-bridging-standardisation-gap>

³⁴ <https://twitter.com/UNECE/status/1236330791174582274>

³⁵ <https://twitter.com/IndianStandards/status/1236648078423162881>

³⁶ <https://twitter.com/ASTMpres/status/1236628631339831296>

³⁷ <https://twitter.com/StandardsCanada/status/1236603849567277057>

³⁸ https://twitter.com/ECOS_Standard/status/1236922681905250304

³⁹ <https://www.ups.com/us/en/services/knowledge-center/article.page?kid=art17208e49584&articlesource=longitudes>

⁴⁰ <https://www.iso.org/news/ref2512.html>

⁴¹ <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/fair-trade-standards-organization-joins-gender-responsive-standards-declaration/>

⁴² <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2020/03/23/a-higher-standard-global-tools-for-the-empowerment-of-women-girls/>

⁴³ <https://blog.bis.gov.in:8098/BISBlog/what-is-united-nations-sustainable-development-goal-5-achieving-gender-equality-and-empowering-all-women-and-girls-is-one-of-the-sustainable-development-goals-sdg-5-set-by-the-united-nations/>

⁴⁴ https://www.ansi.org/news_publications/news_story?menuid=7&articleid=5efeb863-1a75-416f-8bbd-4cf57b8ed9d6

⁴⁵ https://gjepec.org/news_detail.php?id=5865

⁴⁶ <https://trello.com/b/bYZTGSol/gender-responsive-standards>

respective gender action plans, share best practice and encourage network expansion. This work will be supported by the outputs of the expert working groups. The repository of gender-related best practice and training will be expanded to include additional meeting reports, training and assessment material, and gender action plans received from Declaration signatories.

V. Responsibility for the continuation of the work

24. The Gender Responsive Standards initiative is serviced by the ECE secretariat, in cooperation with Ms. Stephanie Eynon, Standards-Makers Development and Engagement Manager, British Standards Institute. Ms. Eynon is the Chair of the Gender Responsive Standards Initiative.

VI. Role of the secretariat

25. The sectoral initiative invites Working Party 6 to request the secretariat to continue to support the work of the initiative by fundraising for awareness-raising and capacity-building activities; servicing the meetings of the Initiative and keeping the website up to date. Contingent upon the availability of extrabudgetary resources the secretariat could assist in further promoting the importance of Gender-Responsive Standards to standards bodies, national Governments and regional groups and participating in awareness-raising and capacity-building activities.

Annex

List of signatories of the Declaration

Regional/ international standards bodies/voluntary sustainability standards bodies

African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO)
AMFORI
ASTM International
European Committee for Standardization (CEN) &
European Committee for Electrotechnical
Standardization (CENELEC)
Fairtrade International
International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)
International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
Round Table Responsible Soy (RTRS)
The Gold Standard
The Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic
Countries (SMIIC)
Verra
WOCAN (Women Organizing for Change in
Agriculture and Natural Resource Management)

National standards bodies

General Directorate of Standardization, Albania
Instituto Argentino de Normalización y Certificación,
Argentina
Austrian Standards International, Austria
Instituto Boliviano de Normalización y Calidad,
Bolivia
Institute for Standardization of Bosnia
and Herzegovina, Bosnia
and Herzegovina
Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas (ABNT),
Brazil
Standards Council of Canada, Canada
Instituto Colombiano de Normas Técnicas y
Certificación, Colombia
Office Congolais de Contrôle, Congo
Organisation for Standardisation, Cyprus
Danish Standards, Denmark
Instituto Dominicano para la Calidad, Dominican
Republic
Servicio Ecuatoriano de Normalización, Ecuador
The Gambia Standards Bureau, Gambia
Georgian National Agency for Standards and
Metrology, Georgia
Deutsches Institut für Normung, Germany
Organismo Hondureño de Normalización, Honduras
Icelandic Standards, Iceland
Bureau of Indian Standards, India

National Standards Authority of Ireland, Ireland
Standards Institution of Israel, Israel
Comitato Elettrotecnico Italiano, Italy
Ente Italiano di Normazione, Italy
Latvian Standard, Latvia
Lithuanian Standards Board, Lithuania
Institut Luxembourgeois de la Normalisation, de
l'Accréditation, de la Sécurité et qualité des produits et
services, Luxembourg
Bureau des Normes de Madagascar, Madagascar
Agence Malienne de Normalisation et de Promotion de
la Qualité, Mali
Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority,
Malta
Mauritius Standards Bureau, Mauritius
Dirección General de Normas, Mexico
Institute for Standardization of Moldova, Moldova
Institut Marocain de Normalisation, Morocco
Instituto Nacional de Normalização e Qualidade,
Mozambique
NEN, the Netherlands Standardization Institute
NEC, the Netherlands Electrotechnical Committee
Standards New Zealand, New Zealand
IEC National Committee of New Zealand, New
Zealand
Standards Norway, Norway
National Institute of Standards and Industrial
Technology, Papua New Guinea

Instituto Português da Qualidade, Portugal

Rwanda Standards Board, Rwanda

Saint Kitts and Nevis Bureau of Standards, Saint Kitts and Nevis

Saint Lucia Bureau of Standards, Saint Lucia

Association Sénégalaise de Normalisation, Senegal

Institute for Standardization of Serbia, Serbia

South African Bureau of Standards, South Africa

Asociación Española de Normalización, Spain

Swedish Institute for Standards, Sweden

Swiss Association for Standardization, Switzerland

Thai Industrial Standards Institute, Thailand

Agence Togolaise de Normalisation, Togo

Bureau of Standards, Trinidad and Tobago

Türk Standardlari Enstitüsü, Turkey

British Standards Institution, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Instituto Uruguayo de Normas Técnicas, Uruguay