



**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES
OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)**

**2021 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM
"Sustainable transport and trade for a green and inclusive economy
after the pandemic"**

(Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 17-18 November 2021)

**SESSION V: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: POLICY CHALLENGES DURING
AND AFTER COVID-19 FOR THE SPECA REGION**

(CONCEPT NOTE)

SESSION V: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: POLICY CHALLENGES DURING AND AFTER COVID-19 FOR THE SPECA REGION

(18 November 2021, 15:00 – 16:00¹, online format)

Background

Women's economic empowerment is widely recognised as a pre-requisite for sustainable development and building inclusive societies. Policies, measures, and initiatives to empower women target the full participation of women and girls in economic, social and political life both as providers of and contributors to the final results as well as beneficiaries of the outcomes. Empowering women in the economy and closing gender gaps, such as in employment and payment, are key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development both as a stand-alone goal – Goal 5, as well as in other SDGs.

Women's economic empowerment is a dynamic process that can trigger important transformative changes to society. This role is crucial in times of crises. The COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on the centrality of women's participation in all spheres of paid and unpaid work and has revealed crucial structural barriers to gender equality. In many countries, including from the SPECA region, women had to leave their jobs or find part-time jobs to take care of children, sick or elderly in their families, which led to a sharp decline of their income and increased uncertainty in re-joining the labour market. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, women dominated in sectors with low pay, long working hours and less opportunities for career development, and in the informal economy. Women's poverty increased largely driven by reduced migrant flows as well as lost opportunities for informal employment in many countries from this region.

As governments move from mitigating the immediate impact on COVID-19 to recovery plans, it is critical that comprehensive policy packages for sustainable development include the focus on women's economic empowerment in all areas from labour market participation to entrepreneurship as a key driver for building back better.

Objective:

The session at the 2021 SPECA Economic Forum on *Women's economic empowerment for sustainable development: policy challenges during and after COVID-19 for the SPECA region* will feature a policy dialogue on the post-pandemic recovery plans to accelerate the advancement of women's participation in the economy in all sectors and at all levels of decision-making. It will address strategies and programmes for strengthening women's economic empowerment to support the achievements of the SDGs and enhance regional cooperation among SPECA countries.

Representatives of SPECA countries will have the opportunity to share experience in undertaking specific measures and discuss visions and plans for recovery policies with a gender lens. Particular attention will be given to policy initiatives and measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women's employability, the adoption of support schemes and mechanisms for women entrepreneurs, including in urban and rural areas. Partners from the UN system in the UNECE region will share experience and plans on supporting the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women to build inclusive economies and resilient societies in the region.

¹ Tashkent time: GMT+5

Key questions:

- What are the three key economic policy areas that need to be addressed as leading the way to women's full participation in your country and sector of activity?
- What are the three key actions you consider as an initial step to accelerate women's participation in the economy in the post-COVID world – at regional, subregional and country levels/sector?
- How regional cooperation could help in advancing women's economic empowerment as part of the 2030 Agenda?

Moderator:

Ms. Monika Linn, Principal Adviser and Chief, Sustainable Development and Gender Unit, UNECE

Speakers:

H.E. Ms. Tanzila Narbaeva, Chairperson of the Senate of Oliy Majlis, Uzbekistan

Ms. Olga Algayerova, Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary, UNECE

Ms. Sadagat Gahramanova, Deputy Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs, Azerbaijan, and Chairperson of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs

Mr. Srinivas Tata, Director, Social Development Division, ESCAP

Interventions by partners and experts:

Ms. Blerta Cela, Deputy Regional Director, Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, UN Women

Ms. Barbora Galvankova, Programme specialist, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, UNDP Regional Hub for Europe and CIS

Ms. Dono Abdurazakova, Senior Gender and Social Protection Adviser, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

Ms. Kankana Dubey, UNECE expert

Ms. Alina Fetisova, Trade Facilitation Programme Officer, International Trade Centre

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