

General discussion Committee on the Transformative Agenda for Gender Equality at Work

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► Draft conclusions concerning the ILO transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work

I. Gender equality at work: central to decent work for all

1. Gender equality is a human right and core to the mandate of the International Labour Organization (ILO). It is also a prerequisite for inclusive, sustainable economic development, resilient labour markets and wellbeing for all workers. Gender equality is both a social justice imperative and economic necessity. Societies and economies cannot afford to waste half their available talent.
2. Over recent decades, notable progress has been made in expanding women's access to education, training, skills development and increasing their participation in the labour market as workers, leaders, entrepreneurs, and business owners. Initiatives to advance gender equality have resulted in improved profitability and productivity, innovation and growth for all.
3. However, gender inequalities in the world of work persist, underpinned by deeply rooted structural barriers including gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms.
4. Even with higher levels of education and skills acquisition, women continue to experience lower labour force participation rates than men, overrepresentation in low-paid sectors and continue to earn, on average, less than men, and are more likely to work part-time. Women are also disproportionately represented in the most insecure forms of informal work and remain underrepresented in high growth sectors and leadership positions. High rates of young women who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) represent both a significant challenge to gender equality and a substantial loss of human and economic potential.
5. Women entrepreneurs, particularly in micro- small- and medium-sized enterprises, continue to face significant barriers, including limited access to finance, business opportunities, networks, digital infrastructure and technology, capacity building and incentives, while a large proportion of women-owned enterprises remain concentrated in the informal economy, limiting their productivity, competitiveness, innovation and sustainability. Expanding women-led enterprises through effective regulations can drive economic growth at household, national, and global levels, but requires sustained support through targeted policies, fiscal incentives, blended finance, and innovative investment models that allow women to focus on core business activities.

6. Gaps in the realization of fundamental principles and rights at work and effective implementation of relevant ILO standards, and persistent structural barriers such as sectoral and occupational segregation and the undervaluation of work in sectors where women predominate, an unequal share of unpaid care responsibilities, inadequate care policies, services and infrastructure, and violence and harassment constrain women's opportunities and sustain gender inequalities. For women experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination these inequalities are even more pronounced.
7. Technological, demographic and environmental transformations offer opportunities to reverse these patterns of inequality and transform the world of work for the benefit of all. However, gender digital divides, unequal access to technical and vocational education and training, including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), risk exacerbating existing gender inequalities. Without deliberate, gender-responsive and evidence-based policies that expand women's access to decent work opportunities, particularly in emerging and dynamic sectors in the green and digital economies, progress on gender equality will remain elusive.

II. Effective policy approaches in an evolving world of work

8. The ILO transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work requires comprehensive, integrated, cross-sectoral and evidence-based approaches combining equality frameworks, economic and labour market policies, social protection policies, care systems, skills policies, measures to build institutional capacity and enforcement mechanisms. The active engagement through social dialogue of employers' and workers' organizations in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies is essential. Gender equality should be a central concern and objective in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies.
9. Gender-responsive macroeconomic, sectoral, industrial and employment policies can play a critical role in addressing gender inequalities in the labour market by expanding access to decent work opportunities, facilitating school-to-work transitions, and lifelong learning, skilling, re-skilling and upskilling, including in STEM, and removing the structural barriers that continue to constrain women's labour market participation and economic empowerment. This is critically important in the context of formalization strategies, and environmental and digital transitions. In addition, measures should address the digital gender divide by ensuring equitable access to digital infrastructure, connectivity, electronic devices, digital literacy and digital skills development, particularly for women and girls in rural areas.
10. The ILO's fundamental Conventions concerning the elimination of discrimination, the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), are close to universal ratification. They guide Members' efforts to promote equality of opportunity and treatment in employment and occupation, including equal remuneration for work of equal value. Broader ratification and effective implementation of relevant international labour standards, including Convention 156, Convention 183 and 190, supported by coherent national policies, institutions, capacity building and enforcement mechanisms, are essential.
11. Protection from discrimination requires adequate policy, legislative and institutional frameworks, effective access to justice and enforcement, and the removal of directly and indirectly discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and the mindset shift to challenge persistent biases.
12. Legal protection from discrimination must be accompanied by practical and proactive measures to achieve substantive equality, ensuring that women enjoy equal opportunities in

practice, and achieve long term economic self-sufficiency. For example, the implementation of the principle of equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value can be advanced through objective job evaluation, pay transparency measures and wage policies, including living wages.

13. Approaches to prevent and eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence and harassment, are most effective when they are addressed both as discrimination and occupational safety and health issues. Particular attention should be given to psychosocial and reproductive health risks, and to emerging forms of violence and harassment, including those associated with digital technologies and technological change.
14. Measures that strengthen maternity protection, parental and care leave policies, as part of integrated care and work-life balance policies that support workers with care responsibilities, facilitate women's entry, retention and advancement in the labour market, promote a more equal sharing of care responsibilities, and help prevent poverty and discrimination related to pregnancy, maternity, parenthood, and care responsibilities. To increase women's participation in the labour market, it is essential to promote enabling pathways for entry and re-entry, including strengthening private and public employment services, career guidance, mentorship, coaching, sponsorship, promotion of role models and women's networks, and supportive employment policies.
15. Well-designed and adequately financed, universal, comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems and integrated care policies and systems, including childcare and long-term care, are essential to support women's and men's full, equal and effective participation in the labour market throughout the life course. Gender-responsive social protection systems, including social protection floors, should address gender gaps in coverage, adequacy and access, respond to gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities across the life course, and promote equality of opportunity and treatment. Care credits in social insurance and pension schemes and income security during maternity, paternity, parental, and other care leave policies can support workers with family responsibilities to enter and remain attached to the labour market.
16. Strong and adequately resourced labour market institutions and effective accountability mechanisms are essential to advance gender equality in the world of work. Labour administration and inspection systems, gender-responsive governance structures, including judicial and enforcement mechanisms, and inclusive social dialogue play a central role in promoting rights, enforcing labour standards, and addressing persistent inequalities.
17. For policies to be effectively implemented, they must be sustainably financed. Gender-responsive budgeting identifies and funds measures that close gender gaps. Public investments and public private partnerships and international and regional cooperation also have a role to play. Targeted investments, including in social infrastructure, are also essential.
18. Progress is further accelerated when policies are informed by robust evidence and a comprehensive understanding of labour market dynamics. Better recognition, measurement and valuation of paid and unpaid care work, informal employment and other often overlooked forms of economic activity can help uncover the structural drivers of inequality and support more targeted interventions.
19. The collection and use of sex-disaggregated data—including on labour force participation, wages, horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, access to care leave and services, working time, access to universal, comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection, and occupational safety and health and violence and harassment —alongside time-use surveys

and gender impact assessments, enable policymakers to identify gaps, monitor progress, evaluate the effectiveness of measures, and adapt policies to evolving economic, demographic, environmental and technological trends.

20. Data disaggregation according to other relevant characteristics, including age, disability, race, ethnicity, migrant status and geographic location enable intersectional analysis and inclusive policy design.

III Accelerating the implementation of the ILO transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work

21. Governments and employers' and workers' organizations, with ILO support, and as appropriate to their spheres of responsibility, should:
 - (a) ratify and implement the fundamental Conventions and other international labour standards that are particularly relevant to gender equality at work;
 - (b) strengthen legal, institutional and enforcement frameworks on equality and non-discrimination and advance equal pay, decent working conditions, work-life balance, social protection across the life course, including maternity protection and parental leave, and protection from violence and harassment, including through social dialogue and collective bargaining;
 - (c) engage in effective and efficient bipartite and tripartite social dialogue to accelerate the implementation of the transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work, including, as appropriate, through dedicated national tripartite strategies;
 - (d) respect, promote and realize the fundamental and enabling rights of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining for all workers;
 - (e) develop or adapt, implement and monitor national, sectoral and targeted strategies that integrate gender-responsive and intersectional measures to address informality, promote the transition to formality of workers and economic units and prevent informalization;
 - (f) build institutional capacities for designing and effectively implementing laws, policies and programmes advancing the transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work, with attention to decent job creation, comprehensive, universal, adequate and sustainable social protection, education, lifelong learning and skills needed for the technological, demographic and environmental transitions, including STEM;
 - (g) monitor the implementation of policies and programmes, including through gender impact assessments and analyses;
 - (h) adopt measures to ensure coordination across different institutions, ministries and levels of government to foster coherent and integrated approaches and interventions that address structural and non-structural barriers to achieve equality at work;
 - (i) invest in research on barriers to gender equality to ensure national approaches are evidence-based, tailored to local circumstances and underpinned by intersectional considerations, and take specific action to tackle the root causes of discrimination and inequality including by addressing discriminatory social norms and stereotypes that limit women's entry, retention and advancement in the labour market;

- (j) strengthen the organization and representation of women in informal and insecure forms of work;
- (k) adopt measures that promote women's access to, retention and progression in leadership and decision-making positions across public institutions, enterprises, and employers' and workers' organizations; and make further efforts to ensure a more balanced representation of women in all ILO meetings.

22. Taking into account the policy approaches set out in these conclusions, and previous conclusions concerning inequalities, decent work and the care economy and transition to formality, the ILO should strengthen its efforts to advance the transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work through technical assistance, policy guidance, capacity building, research, awareness-raising, and development cooperation. To this end, the Office, in consultation with constituents, should:

- (a) support constituents in adopting integrated and evidence-based approaches to advancing the transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work;
- (b) develop a strategy or framework, drawing on the ILO's normative mandate, technical expertise and tripartite structure, to support implementation and the regular monitoring of progress;
- (c) provide support to address discrimination in employment and occupation, including the adoption and effective implementation of non-discrimination laws, labour administration and inspection systems;
- (d) deepen research and disseminate knowledge on the impact of technological, environmental and demographic transformations on gender equality at work, including good practices in skills development and skills needs anticipation, and the role of freedom of association, social dialogue including collective bargaining and tripartite cooperation, and workplace cooperation, in order to assist constituents in maximizing opportunities and mitigating risks;
- (e) undertake research and analysis on the drivers of the undervaluation of work predominantly performed by women, including in jobs, occupations and sectors in which women are disproportionately represented, effective measures to address such undervaluation, and the implications of technological, demographic and labour market transitions for these occupations and sectors;
- (f) continue its support to constituents for the prevention and elimination of violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment, in the world of work;
- (g) promote equal remuneration for work of equal value and the closing of gender pay gaps through development of practical tools for enterprises and capacity building for constituents, leveraging the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) in partnership with the OECD and UN Women;
- (h) assist constituents in the design, financing and implementation of gender-responsive universal, comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems across the life course, and extend coverage by at least 2 percentage points per annum in line with the Seville Commitment;
- (i) support constituents in developing national care strategies consistent with the ILO 5R framework. This should include knowledge generation on evidence-based financing mechanisms. Tools such as the ILO Global Care Policy Portal, the ILO Care Policy Investment Simulator and the ILO South-4-Care Platform are part of these efforts;

- (j) continue strengthening gender mainstreaming across its programmes and operations, including through adequate expertise and institutional capacity;
- (k) strengthen its capacity to generate, analyse and disseminate timely, high-quality and internationally comparable statistical data and continue to develop statistical tools and indicators to improve the visibility of gender inequalities and intersecting forms of discrimination, whilst supporting constituents in strengthening national statistical capacities to collect, produce and use disaggregated data;
- (l) maintain and strengthen its global leadership on gender equality in the world of work;
- (m) further strengthen partnerships, cooperation and policy coherence with relevant United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, development partners and other stakeholders, including by promoting policy coherence between the ILO Decent Work Country Programmes and the United Nations development cooperation frameworks, including through South-South and triangular cooperation, as appropriate.