

STATEMENT

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Labour Office

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STATEMENT BY

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Advancement of Women – Agenda Item 28 (a)

Chair,

Promoting gender equality and non-discrimination have been at the heart of the ILO's mandate since its establishment in 1919. And for nearly 100 years, a wide range of international labour standards, declarations, resolutions and programmatic work have served to reinforce the importance of these issues for the ILO and its constituents: governments, workers' and employers' organizations.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirmed the universal consensus on the crucial importance of gender equality and its contribution to the achievement of poverty reduction and inequalities, universal social protection, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Inequality between women and men persists in global labour markets, in respect of opportunities, treatment and outcomes. Over the last two decades, women's significant progress in educational achievements has not translated into a comparable improvement in their position at work. In many regions in the world, in comparison to men, women are more likely to become and remain unemployed, have fewer chances to participate in the labour force and – when they do – often have to accept lower quality jobs.

Progress in surmounting these obstacles has been slow and is limited to a few regions across the world. Even in many of those countries where gaps in labour force participation and employment have narrowed and where women are shifting away from contributing family work and moving to the services sector, the quality of women's jobs remains a matter of concern. The unequal distribution of unpaid care and household work between women and men and between families and the society is an important determinant of gender inequalities at work.

The barriers to women's advancement are real. The challenges are known. The burning question is what are we doing organizationally and collectively to address them in concrete ways to move closer to the day when gender equality and women's empowerment are the norm.

Chair,

The ILO, as part of its upcoming centenary, has launched the **Women at Work Initiative** as a major stocktaking of the status and conditions of women in the world of work, with a view to identifying innovative action that could give new impetus to the ILO's work, and collaboration with key stakeholders to fulfil our constitutional mandate to promote full and lasting gender equality and non-discrimination.

This includes work in areas such as global research and knowledge initiatives, global gender dialogues, work on emerging issues and collaboration on developing cross-cutting policy drivers on gender and non-discrimination.

The ILO released a major publication entitled "*World Employment Social Outlook: Trends for women*" in June this year to coincide with the World of Work Summit held during the International Labour Conference. The key findings show that gaps between men and women in the world of work remain widespread and begin with women's limited access to the labour market and, once in the job market, women have restricted access to quality employment opportunities. Closing these gaps would yield significant economic benefits and improve individual welfare.

Furthermore, **ILO teamed up with Gallup World Poll** to undertake surveys in 140 countries to develop the first-ever account of global perceptions and realities of women and men regarding women and work. The results of the survey, entitled "*Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men*", revealed that most women and men around the globe prefer that women have paid jobs. It also indicated the need for family-supportive policies, which enable women to remain and progress in paid employment and encourage men to take their fair share of care work, as crucial to achieving gender equality at work.

During the opening of this year's General Assembly, the ILO, UN Women and OECD launched the **Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC)**. EPIC is a multi-stakeholder partnership to support the advancement of equal pay for work of equal value, as set out in SDG target 8.5. EPIC is an engagement platform for collaborative global, regional and national action, supported through advocacy, knowledge-sharing, capacity building, workshops and conferences, technical advisory services, data analysis and monitoring.

As our Director-General stated during the Commission on the Status of Women this year the ILO is firmly committed to working with the UN community on bringing the decent work mandate to the challenge of realising a future where women's economic empowerment, gender equality and social justice are features of and drivers for a better world.