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## Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) launch

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<b>ESTABLISHING PARTNERS</b>	ILO, UN Women and OECD
<b>DATE &amp; TIME</b>	18 September 2017 • 3:00pm to 5:30pm
<b>LOCATION</b>	UN Headquarters, New York

### The Coalition

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A strategic multi-stakeholder partnership is being established, called the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC), to assist UN Member States towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 8, target 8.5 of which calls for equal pay for work of equal value by 2030, as well as Goal 5, as equal pay is central to the achievement of gender equality and empowering women. It is envisaged that the specific activities under EPIC will, due to the fundamental rights nature of equal pay, generate an even greater number of positive externalities that will directly contribute to and have a wider impact on other SDGs and targets making EPIC a unique accelerator partnership.

In order to achieve this goal, the EPIC partnership will bring together a wide range of individuals, represented in the EPIC's Platform of Champions, and institutions with relevant expertise and experience on, as well as the interest in, equal pay for work of equal value and closing the gender pay gap. It will set the stage for advocacy and policy and action-oriented processes, involving, among others, governments and countries from across all regions that have already taken innovative measures to drive implementation on the ground or are given serious consideration to do so. EPIC is an engagement platform for collaborative global, regional and national action that will be supported through advocacy, knowledge sharing, capacity building, workshops and conferences, technical advisory services, data analysis and monitoring.

At the national level, it is proposed that EPIC will work with government agencies, workers' and employers' organizations, and social dialogue institutions, as well as with other strategic partners. Work could include supporting the strengthening of national legislation and policies as well as enforcement mechanisms, assisting in building national capacity, and developing and integrating tools and policies, including for gender-neutral job evaluations, for use by businesses and other relevant organizations. Employers and trade unions, as well as other key stakeholders, will have a

central role in the application and rolling out of equal pay policies.

The proposed launch of EPIC at the UN during the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly will bring together senior Government and UN officials, senior officials from other International Organizations, top business executives and leaders of trade unions and employers' organizations, civil society and individuals that have been instrumental in promoting and implementing equal pay policies.

## **Objective of the event**

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- To launch the Equal Pay International Coalition with high-level commitment by the UN system, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), governments, employers and workers and their organizations and other stakeholders to take action;
- To increase support, awareness and greater engagement of governments, the UN system, the OECD, constituents and other key stakeholders at the global, regional and national levels for EPIC.

## **Overview**

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In September 2015, a summit of heads of State adopted the Sustainable Development Goals to frame the global development agenda (2030 Agenda) for the next 13 years. Within this framework, a standalone Goal 8 was established calling for the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Within Goal 8, a specific target 8.5 was set to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value by 2030.

Across all regions, countries and sectors, women are paid less than men – According to OECD, in 2014 median monthly earnings for women, across G20 and OECD countries, were on average 17 per cent below those of men, and in many countries the higher the level of earnings and skills, the larger the differences in pay between men and women. Despite efforts to address this challenge, progress on narrowing the gender pay gap has been slow. In fact, without the right policy action, progress could halt altogether, or even go into reverse.

To some extent, gender pay gaps are explained by educational and career choices, labour market factors including experience, hours worked, the sector of economic activity, caring responsibilities, and the size of enterprises. However, even after accounting for differences in observable worker and job characteristics, over half of the monthly gender pay gaps across the OECD countries remains unexplained.

This suggests that gender stereotyping, social conventions and institutions, the lack of pay transparency as well as discrimination play an important role in pay differentials between men and women. While the size of the gender pay gap and the proportion of it which is due to discrimination vary by country, everywhere in the world, the gender pay gap tends to widen at the age of parenthood.

Among the policy responses that can help reduce gender pay gaps are equal access to career opportunities, increased pay transparency, a more equal sharing of unpaid work between men and women, and greater investment in infrastructure and public services for care.

Research shows that while the principle of equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value has been widely endorsed, with over 90% of ILO member States having ratified the ILO's Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), applying it in practice has proven difficult.

The Agreed Conclusions from the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March 2017) recognized the importance of taking legislative and other reforms “to realize the equal rights of women and men...and equal opportunities for women for full and productive employment and decent work, and equal pay for work of equal value.”

On the occasion of the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly, the ILO, UN Women and the OECD will co-host a high-level event with Heads of State/Government, senior UN officials, business executives and leaders of employers' and workers' organizations and other key stakeholders to launch EPIC.

The purpose of the event is to build wide political support as well as introduce tangible and specific actions for the realization of the equal pay agenda by convening a high level meeting of Heads of State/Government, Heads of the establishing partners organizations, senior business executives and trade union leaders and other key stakeholders.

The Equal Pay Platform of Champions, which was launched in March 2017 during the Commission on the Status of Women, is a key element of the Coalition, and will be essential for the advocacy strategy, increasing support for equal pay by proactively reaching out to decision and policy makers. Furthermore, in keeping with the recommendations of the reports prepared by the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, the EPIC will contribute to the removal of barriers to women's economic empowerment and ensure that women are free and equal participants in a robust, sustainable and inclusive global economy.

## **Audience**

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Representatives of Member States, UN officials, senior officials from business and workers' and employers' organizations, academia, Foundations, media and civil society.

## **Format of Event**

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It is suggested that the event, to be held at the UN Headquarters in New York, have four components:

- 1. Opening Segment** – will feature the UN Secretary-General along with the Co-Chair of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel for Women's Economic Empowerment. Each will provide a 5-7 minute statement on the strategic vision for the work of EPIC in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the recommendations of the High-level Panel;
- 2. Leadership Group** – will consist of the Heads of the three establishing organizations, namely

the ILO, UN Women and the OECD, who will in a moderated, interactive discussion focus on the role that they expect EPIC to play, and how they believe it could contribute to achieving equal pay and its importance to women's empowerment. The session will be moderated by a renowned journalist;

3. **Member States** – about five Heads of State/Government that have shown leadership with respect to moving forward equal pay laws and policies, and raising the visibility of the issue, will elaborate their national experiences and challenges in an interactive, moderated discussion with a leading journalist;
4. **Actors of the real economy** – a number of leading multinational businesses, and senior representatives of employers' and workers' organizations and other key stakeholders, will speak about the specific actions they are taking to put in place equal pay policies and commit to sharing good practices along with metrics that can show progress in this area. This provides the businesses, employers' and workers' organizations an opportunity to highlight their leadership and plans for expansion of a rights-based agenda in their operations, as well as underscoring the business case.
5. **Celebrity keynote address (optional)** – in support of the previously launched Global Equal Pay Platform of Champions by UN Women at the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, it is suggested that a celebrity/social entrepreneur that has demonstrated impact on promoting women's empowerment could be engaged to provide a keynote address.

Components 3 and 4 of the suggested launch event will be moderated by globally recognized journalists/media personalities or other agreed experts to ensure an engaging and fluid discussion. The event will culminate in a commitment by the participants to work together to lead activities and develop policies, in consultation with the establishing organizations, that will contribute to the realization of equal pay for work of equal value and to closing the gender pay gap.

There will be a reception afterwards for the various actors to meet and discuss these issues in a more informal setting.

## Contacts

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