Promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment are at the core of the 2030 Agenda. Women have the right to equality in all areas of life, including in public working life. Achieving SDG 5 (Gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment) and SDG 8 (Promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth) are extremely important in this respect.

Considerable efforts and progress have been made in promoting women’s empowerment and gender equality in public life, including in public working life. Strategies for gender equality and non-discrimination as well as other mechanisms and tools to ensure equality, accountability and sustainability of gender initiatives have been introduced to remove implicit and explicit barriers to gender equality and women’s participation.

In spite of various efforts there is still room for improvement. Crucial issues for achieving gender equality in working life include, among others, bridging the gender pay gap, integration of work and family life and equal sharing of unpaid domestic and care work. There is a need for awareness-raising through education, addressing differentiated professional choices and occupational segregation at all levels. Women need to have economic independence and the participation of disadvantaged women in working life should be guaranteed. Men should be encouraged to promote gender equality in working life.

Employment opportunities and working life are changing rapidly because of new information technology, automation and robotics and new forms of work. New thinking is needed to find ways to extend working careers and reconcile work and family life in different phases of the life cycle.

As a large-scale employer the public sector, which is often female dominated, should have a leading role in addressing these challenges and in advancing gender equality and women's economic empowerment through gender sensitive policies and practices. The side event focuses on sharing policies, practices and information on promoting gender equality and non-discrimination in the public sector and in the UN System. Recruitment, equal pay and career development in public service will be discussed as well as the planning, creation, adjustment and implementation of gender sensitive policies and other tools for promoting overall wellbeing at work.