Increasing women’s workforce participation – barriers and solutions from the G20 and Beyond

A CSW side event hosted by the Government of Australia, the Government of Turkey, and the Government of Japan
Thursday 12 March, 1:15 – 2:30pm
Conference Room 11, UN Headquarters New York

CONCEPT NOTE

Increasing women’s workforce participation and ensuring women’s equal participation in decent work is a critical driver for achieving gender equality, increasing women’s economic empowerment and ending poverty.

The clear and pervasive gender gap in the workforces of countries around the world, particularly for women of child-bearing age, is widely acknowledged. Increasingly larger numbers of women are also working in the informal economy, characterised by jobs with low wages and poor working conditions.

Gender inequality and discrimination against women in the workplace, such as discrimination related to pregnancy and caring responsibilities, is a significant contributor to women’s under-participation or withdrawal from the workforce. Social and cultural norms and stereotypes relating to men and women’s roles, the lack of recognition, valuing and sharing of unpaid caring work further inhibit women’s participation in the workforce.

The gender gap in workforce participation is also connected to other economic gender gaps, including women’s under-representation at leadership levels, the gender pay gap and the gender gap in retirement income and savings.

Reducing the gender gap in workforce participation and ensuring women’s equal participation in decent work and women’s economic empowerment is a critical priority as we renew our commitment to implement the Beijing Platform of Action.

In late 2014, G20 leaders committed to reduce the gap in work force participation rates between men and women by 25 per cent by 2025. This commitment complements and
accelerates G20 nations’ achievement of key actions areas under the Beijing Platform of Action, including addressing women’s poverty and equality in the economy. As we recommit to the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action and work to agree to the post-2015 development agenda, women’s work force participation and access to decent work, is more critical than ever.

This panel discussion will explore opportunities and barriers to meeting the G20 commitment, within G20 countries and beyond. The panel will discuss impediments to women’s work force participation and economic empowerment, including discrimination in the workplace, in different country contexts, and exchange ideas and approaches for closing the gender gap in workforce participation.

Chair/ Opening Statement:
The Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister, Australia

Panellists:
• Ms. Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission
• H.E. Ms Pham Thi Hai Chuyen, Minister of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs (Vietnam)
• Ms. Hiroko Hashimoto, Professor Emeritus of Gender Studies and Principal, Jumonji High School, Japan
• Ms. Carmen Quintanilla, Member of the Parliamentary Assembly, Spain

Closing Remarks:
Ms. Nesrin Çelik, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, Turkey