CHAMPIONING WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
Concept Paper

Background

Two decades have passed since the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, where the global community agreed the most ambitious and progressive platform for action to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. While significant progress has been achieved in every part of the world, full gender equality and women's empowerment remains a goal yet to be achieved. The unprecedented consensus reached in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, reflected in a stand-alone goal on gender equality and a mainstreaming of gender throughout the agenda, presents a once in a generation opportunity to galvanize stakeholders to deliver on the promise of gender equality and deliver real change in the lives of women and girls everywhere.

There is a growing recognition that a key component of achieving gender equality is a focus on women’s economic empowerment, and that empowering women and girls to actively participate in economic life is interlinked with the promotion and protection of human rights, the advancement of human development and for sustained economic growth.

But the challenges are huge. Multiple layers of disadvantages, discriminatory social norms, persistent violence against women, and gender bias in economic policy still constrain women's ability to advance economically in equal footing with men. In order to achieve an ambitious and transformative 2030 agenda, these challenges must be addressed head on by governments through smart economic and social policies, and by all stakeholders through transforming societies to value the economic contribution of women on an equal footing with men.

The High-Level Panel (HLP) on Women’s Economic Empowerment

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon established the High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment in March 2016 as part of his efforts to ensure that the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda are translated into concrete action. The Panel was composed of a diverse group of stakeholders representing governments, employers and worker organizations, businesses, multilateral organizations, development partners and civil society.

The High-Level Panel presented a preliminary report to the Secretary General and the UN membership in September 2016, in which four areas of work and seven drivers for the economic empowerment of women
were identified. In March 2017, the HLP presented its final report to Secretary General António Guterres, which builds further on the drivers identified and provides specific, action-oriented recommendations to advance women’s economic empowerment in the four areas of work identified.

The presentation of the final report marked the end of the High-Level Panel’s formal work.

**Championing Women’s Economic Empowerment**

The Group of Champions of Women’s Economic Empowerment was established in April 2017 in order to take forward the work of the High-Level Panel, to give continuity to its findings and recommendations and to ensure its recommendations are considered holistically in the work of the United Nations.

The Group of Champions is a platform for Member States to collaborate on initiatives, activities and events on women’s economic empowerment, to share information and to build momentum for transformative change across our respective societies.

An initial list of functions the Group can play include:

- A space to share positions, to consult for support and to build partnerships around the topic of the economic empowerment of women and gender equality, in a larger context
- Generate and share key messages with the membership of the group and other key partners
- Influence the narrative in the different processes and fora within the context of the work in the United Nations
- Use spheres of influence to promote the value of the economic empowerment of women and the benefits for society in general
- Share knowledge, best practices and initiatives that others may benefit from and that could be replicated in other spaces
- Generate synergies with other groups of friends that promote gender equality such as the gender parity champions and the gender parity task force
- Keep the topic of the economic empowerment of women present in other groups’ agendas (i.e. migration, indigenous peoples, disabilities)
- Organize briefings that allow for the increasing of knowledge and information on the issue from different stakeholders’ views
- Propose the organization of events with the participation of different stakeholders (private sector, academic, civil society, development institutions) that underscore the urgency and benefits of the advancement of the economic empowerment of women
- Engage constructively with UN Women, as the coordinating entity of gender equality and the empowerment of women, to ensure the positioning of this issue within the organization at the highest levels

In general terms, the main purpose of the Champions of Women’s Economic Empowerment is to build on the acknowledgement of the fact that Women’s Economic Empowerment is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do. The Group will continue to look creatively at ways to ensure that women’s economic empowerment stays on the agenda at the United Nations, and that implementation of the 2030 agenda contributes to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.