



Annual Meeting

Working Group on Gender and the Sustainable Development Goals United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) Gender Equality: The Catalyst for Global Connectivity and Transformative Growth in the SPECA Region

Monday, 20 November 2023

Baku, Azerbaijan

Session 1: 14:00 – 15:30

Session 2: 15:50 – 17:00

1. Introduction

The economic empowerment of women and gender equality are fundamental to achieving a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future for all. This is widely acknowledged and reflected in the 2030 Agenda both as a stand-alone goal for gender equality – SDG 5 – and as an accelerator to other SDGs in specific gender-responsive targets. Recent decades of experience in development policy and practice have further reinforced that addressing gender inequality has a strong impact across all dimensions of sustainable development.

The theme of this year's SPECA Economic Forum event is "Transforming the SPECA Region into a Connectivity Hub with Global Outreach". This focus on the transformative potential of the SPECA region, invites dialogue on how gender equality efforts can catalyse aspirations of establishing a connectivity hub within the region, that affords a central role for women's economic empowerment.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The 2023 session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) brought attention to the theme of addressing innovation and technological change in the digital age. The conclusions of the CSW session outlined policies and actions to be undertaken by Governments in relation to policy frameworks; economic and social policies; leadership and decision-making.

Looking forward, the CSW 2024 theme will examine accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective. Opportunities exist within the scope of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs to consider the thematic addressed within the CSW framework and apply the adjoining recommendations to the SPECA region, in the context of transformative potential.

This year's annual meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs will provoke dialogue to inform policy initiatives and good practices taken towards achieving women's full, equal and meaningful participation and decision-making in transforming the SPECA region into a connectivity hub with global outreach. In particular, the discussion will explore the potential for gender equality to act as a catalyst for global connectivity and transformative growth in the SPECA region.

UNECE and ESCAP will convene the annual meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs on 20 November 2023 during the 'SPECA Week' of various SPECA focused events including the SPECA Economic Forum taking place from 21 to 22 November 2023 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The 2023 annual meeting of the SPECA Working Group and SDGs will be convened in person.

2. Objectives

The annual meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs is held in advance of the SPECA Economic Forum. The meeting serves as a forum for policy dialogue, capacity-building and networking for government stakeholders from relevant key ministries and agencies in SPECA countries, in partnership with UN agencies to discuss critical and key emerging issues for gender-transformative economic policies to support women's economic empowerment. The meeting will contribute to efforts toward women's economic empowerment and gender equality, poverty reduction and economic growth in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Participants will share experiences in the promotion of gender equality and how these measures have affected women's empowerment in their countries. Strategies and actions will be further discussed to identify the way forward towards advancing gender equality, including women's full economic and political empowerment in support of the 2030 Agenda.

Specific objectives of the Working Group for this annual meeting include:

- Explore the potential of gender equality as a catalyst for global connectivity and transformative growth in the SPECA region.
- Share experiences and lessons learned in the promotion of women's full, equal and meaningful participation and decision-making in the context of economic empowerment and discuss challenges and national priorities for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
- Bring increasing prominence to the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment for the SPECA region in advancing towards the targets of all Sustainable Development Goals.
- Identify actions and best practices to improve the enabling environment for women and girls in SPECA countries, including cross-sectoral measures and institutional coordination, public-private partnerships and active engagement of women's associations and women beneficiary groups into consultative and decision-making processes.
- Discuss how the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs can best be utilised to advance cooperation on the implementation of the SDG 5 on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls.

3. Outcomes

The outcome of the meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs will inform the work of UNECE and ESCAP towards the CSW framework and the Beijing +30 regional review process within the context of subregional collaboration with SPECA countries. Furthermore, it is expected that joint initiatives and areas of regional cooperation will be nurtured for potential future subregional collaboration.

4. Participants

The meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs will bring together government representatives working towards the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in SPECA countries.

In addition, government representatives from national women's machineries and the participation of government representatives from other relevant ministries is also highly encouraged (ministries of finance and the economy in particular). Participants may further include representatives of relevant UN agencies, funds and programmes; representatives of international financial institutions (IFIs); representatives of civil society organizations; and other relevant stakeholders across the UNECE and ESCAP regions.

5. Modality/structure of event

The meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs will convene in person in Baku, Azerbaijan. Simultaneous interpretation English/Russian will be available.

The meeting will be opened by the Chairperson of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs, Ms. Sadagat Gahramanova - Deputy Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs, Azerbaijan, together with high-level representatives from UNECE and ESCAP.

The annual meeting of the *SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs* will consist of two substantive sessions:

(a) **Session 1: Empowering Global Connectivity and Transformation through Gender Equality in the SPECA region: Country Interventions**

Country presentations by participants (approx. six minutes each), sharing of best practices and lessons learned on the thematic priority areas for the Working Group including policy initiatives and measures implemented to achieve women's full, equal and meaningful participation and decision-making, with a special focus on:

- *Addressing the digital divide for **Innovation and Technological Change***
- *Addressing gender dimensions of poverty and **strengthening institutions and financing***

(b) **Session 2: Shaping an Equitable Future: Positioning Women at the Heart of SPECA's Transformation** A group discussion together with contributing experts, to discuss how momentum can be maintained in addressing challenges to achieving women's economic empowerment within the region, focusing on

- *Gender Equality and the Digital Divide (policy making processes and leadership)*
- *Addressing obstacles to women's entrepreneurship*



2023 SPECA WORKING GROUP ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE SDGs

Gender Equality: The Catalyst for Global Connectivity and Transformative Growth in the SPECA Region PROGRAMME

20th NOVEMBER 2023 | BAKU | AZERBAIJAN

Opening Session

14:00 – 14:20

- **Ms. Sadagat Gahramanova**, Chairperson of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs, Deputy Chairperson, State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, Azerbaijan
- **Ms. Gulden Turkoz-Cosslett**, Regional Director a.i., UN Women, Europe and Central Asia
- **Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin**, Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (video message)
- **Ms. Lin Yang**, Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (video message)

Overview of the Meeting/Setting Context

14:20 – 14:30

- **Ms. Hilary Murphy**, Senior Social Affairs Officer, UNECE Office of the Executive Secretary

Session 1: Empowering Global Connectivity and Transformation through Gender Equality in the SPECA region: Country Interventions

14:30 – 14:50

- **Session Moderator**
Ms. Channe Lindstrøm Oğuzhan, Social Affairs Officer, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP
- **Intro to Strategic Foresight in the SPECA Region**
Ms. Shreya Kumra, Programme Management Officer, UNECE Office of the Executive Secretary

14:50 – 15:30
(six mins per country)

Guiding Question for Discussion

The theme of the SPECA Forum this year, relates to 'Transforming the SPECA Region Into a Connectivity Hub with Global Outreach'. Within this ambition, what are the opportunities within your country for advancing gender equality in relation to:

- **Addressing the digital divide for *Innovation and Technological Change***
- **Addressing gender dimensions of poverty and *strengthening institutions and financing***
- Azerbaijan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Kazakhstan
- Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan
- Tajikistan

15:30 – 15:50: *Coffee Break 20 mins*

Session 2: Shaping an Equitable Future: Positioning Women at the Heart of SPECA's Transformation

15:50 – 16:20

- **Session Moderator**

Ms. Hilary Murphy, Senior Social Affairs Officer, UNECE Office of the Executive Secretary

Setting the Scene Presentation

Ms. Channe Lindstrøm Oğuzhan, Social Affairs Officer, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP

Guiding Question.

In the context of multi-crises and taking a foresight perspective, how do we ensure momentum is maintained to address challenges of achieving women's economic empowerment within the region. Particularly, in relation to challenges of:

- *Gender Equality and the **digital divide** (policy making processes and leadership)*
- *Addressing obstacles to **women's entrepreneurship***

Expert Contributors

- **Ms. Alessandra Roccasalvo**, Resident Representative, UNDP Azerbaijan – *Overview: Pervasive obstacles to women's equal economic participation.*
- **Ms. Tatyana Mikayilova**, Founder, Azerbaijan Business Women
- **Ms. Yolanda Iriarte (TBD)**, Strategic Partnerships, Intergovernmental and Normative Engagement Specialist TBD - UN Women
- **Ms. Tiffany Sprague**, UNDP-UNICEF STEM4ALL
- **Ms. Alejandra Cordero**, Principal, Gender Advisor, Gender & Economic Inclusion, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

16:20 – 16:50

Open Discussion with Member States

- Discussion moderated by **Ms. Shreya Kumra**, Programme Management Officer, UNECE Office of the Executive Secretary

Guiding Discussion Questions

- *How can women's entrepreneurship effectively contribute to regional connectivity?*
- *How can the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs, be best leveraged going forward to ensure sustained and coherent action towards gender equality?*

Closing Remarks

16:50 – 17:00

Closing Remarks from SPECA Country Representatives.

Ms. Sadagat Gahramanova, Chairperson of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs, Deputy Chairperson, State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, Azerbaijan