

## **Statement by the Eurasian Economic Commission**

### **Beijing+20 Regional Review meeting**

**6 – 7 November 2014**

#### **Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls for Sustainable Development**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Participants of the Forum!

First of all, on behalf of the Eurasian Economic Commission, let me thank the organizers for kindly inviting us to this important international meeting devoted to gender equality and widening the perspectives for female sustainable development in all spheres of life.

Being a permanent regulatory body of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, the Eurasian Economic Commission recognizes great importance to gender equality, including the participation of women in decision-making.

Taking the opportunity, I would like to make a few remarks concerning the Eurasian integration process.

The Eurasian Economic Integration made a significant boost in 2010 since the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia came into effect, within which Common Customs tariff and the Customs Code are in force.

Starting with July the 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, all customs checks at internal borders between the three member states were abolished. Thus, free movement of goods within the Customs Union was guaranteed.

In three years after the establishment of the Customs Union in 2010, mutual trade between CU member states has grown by more than 35%, to \$64.5 billion.

Only in 2013, mutual foreign direct investment within the Customs Union grew by 35%, totaling \$2.7 billion.

In 2013 in comparison with 2009, there was a 15.4% growth in the member states' GDP, which now equates to over \$2.4 trillion.

In 2013, the average GDP per capita within CU and SES member states amounted to \$14 thousand, while the world average was \$10.5 thousand.

On January the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, 17 international agreements setting out the legal framework of the Single

Economic Space came into effect, and thus the SES became operational. The goal was to ensure the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people.

The success of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space has allowed the three member states to proceed to the next stage of integration – to the Eurasian Economic Union.

On May the 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014, in Astana the presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia signed a Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union. By now, the Treaty has been ratified by all the three countries, and on January the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, it comes into force.

According to the Treaty, the establishment of the EEU is to serve the interests of all the member states by helping facilitate sustainable socio-economic development, to improve the welfare and quality of life for their citizens and to strengthen each nation's competitiveness in the global economy.

The Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union also provides for international cooperation with third countries, regional and international organizations. Since 2012 the Eurasian Economic Commission which started its work that year, has signed 25 memoranda of mutual understanding with foreign countries (Armenia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine etc.) and international organizations, such as the CIS, the UNECE, the UNCTAD.

The Eurasian Economic Commission representatives extensively participate in events held by international organizations including those devoted to gender equality. In particular, a Member of the Board (Minister) in charge of Development of Integration and Macroeconomics Tatyana Valovaya has participated in 2012 APEC Women and the Economy Forum in St. Petersburg (Russia) and in 2013 APEC High Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy in Bali (Indonesia).

20 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, the parliaments of our countries have passed new legislation that conforms to new socio-economic conditions. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia consistently work on the advancement of women rights by improving the existing legislation. The principle of equality is explicitly incorporated in the national legislation of all three countries.

The Comparative analysis of the Human Development Index (HDI) used to measure quality of life and several indexes for measurement of gender inequality in political representation clearly shows that these two parameters are apparently interdependent. In general, countries with a more enabling environment for women participation in politics have a higher standard of living.

Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia are included in the “high human development category” whereas in the UNDP Gender Inequality Index, among 183 countries assessed (Belarus ranks 53rd with Russia and Kazakhstan ranking 57th and 70th, respectively).

Concerning women representation in parliament, Belarus has the highest percentage of female parliamentarians. Precisely, as of March 2014, 35% of parliamentarians were women.

*For information: In respect of women representation in parliament, Belarus ranks first among the CIS countries and the 44th around the world.*

Regarding women involvement in politics in Kazakhstan, positive dynamics can be observed. If in 2000 only 10.4% of national parliamentarians were female, in 2010 women representation increased to 18%. In the newly elected Kazakh parliament Majlis women account for 25.2% of parliamentarians.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (an international organization of the parliaments of sovereign states), as of October 1, 2014, only 21.8% of national parliamentarians around the world were female.

Consequently, the number of women parliamentarians in Belarus is higher than the world average and even higher than the European average (24.9%).

*For information:*

<i>Americas</i>	<i>25.7%</i>
<i>Europe - OSCE member countries</i>	<i>24.9%</i>
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	<i>22.2%</i>
<i>Asia</i>	<i>18.3%</i>
<i>Arab States</i>	<i>15.9%</i>
<i>Pacific</i>	<i>15.3%</i>

The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report benchmarks national gender gaps of 136 countries in respect of economic, political, education- and health-based criteria. In 2013, Kazakhstan ranked 32nd in the overall rating that is above 14 EU member states.

The Russia Federation continues to be at the top in respect of women representation in the civil service, amounting to 71% of all civil servants.

Therefore, in our countries, women holding two thirds of the public sector positions are responsible for such important areas as education, healthcare and state policy and thus substantially contribute to a nation's GDP.

*For information: As reported by the government, women in Kazakhstan account for 40% of the country's GDP and that is a quite positive development.*

With respect to the Eurasian Economic Commission, this overall tendency is also present. Though, there are crucial differences.

Namely, if in Russia female civil servants are predominantly holding minor positions, the Eurasian Economic Commission offers women far more attractive opportunities. It goes without saying that there is no discrimination during the employee selection process and greater career prospects.

The reality is that women are more active and more confident while working for the Eurasian Economic Commission.

Now more than 54% of the EEC staff are female. And if among the Members of the Board of the Commission there is only one female Minister, women account for 20% of the Head of the Departments and around 50% of the Deputy Directors of the Department positions.

*For information:*

*As of October 7, 2014, 874 employees were employed by the Eurasian Economic Commission. 476 of them (54.5%) were female.*

*Among the female employees, 124 women (or 26.1%) were holding senior positions (Deputy Head of Section and above).*

In my opinion, it is significant that the Eurasian Economic Commission has an opportunity to monitor how women participation and gender balance in decision-making process influence our countries' economic growth.

The establishment of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space has provided vast opportunities for businesses. The Eurasian Economic Commission pays attention to business development and promotion of entrepreneurship within the common economic area.

I am convinced that by virtue of our efforts to match business environment in the three member states, women empowerment will be enhanced. In the coming years we expect to have more women entrepreneurs contributing extensively to economic development in the EEU.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Eurasian Economic Commission, I would like to thank you for your attention and wish the participants of the Forum comprehensive and productive discussions on this

very important issue.