

**Statement by United Kingdom  
Beijing+20 Regional Review meeting  
6 – 7 November 2014**

- UK supports a standalone gender equality goal in the post-2015 development framework.
  - We support the EU statement that the Framework should address justice, equality and equity, good governance, democracy and the rule of law, with a strong focus on the empowerment and rights of women and girls and gender equality, and on preventing and combating violence against women.
  - We remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights for women.
  
  - A key focus of the post-2015 agenda is eradicating extreme poverty. To achieve this we must advance women's economic empowerment and participation.
  
  - Our strategy for increasing women's economic participation is based on a partnership with business around three key priorities:
    - 1) Women's Business Council
    - 2) Think Act Report
    - 3) Women on Boards
- 1) The Women's Business Council,**
- senior business leaders work with government to support women by
  - Supporting the career choices of young girls and women
  - Helping women to climb the ladder
  - Supporting women's continuing development and contribution throughout their working lives
  - Helping women gain the necessary skills to set up and run their own business
- 2) Think Act Report**
- Voluntary initiative that encourages and supports businesses to think about gender equality in their organisation, act where necessary, and report data and share best practice with other organisations
  - now supported by over 260 companies, collectively covering over 2.5 million employees
- 3) Women on Boards**
- Lord Davies Voluntary Business led approach to getting more women on boards
  - now almost 23% on boards in the FTSE 100 – up from 12.5% in 2011 and 17.5% on the boards of the FTSE 250 –up from 7.8% in 2011

Our work with the private sector is underpinned by government policies such as

- extending the right to request flexible working to everyone
- introducing shared parental leave in 2015 to allow families to share their caring responsibilities
- promoting enterprise by providing support for women wishing to start their own business
- From Autumn 2015 almost 2 million families could benefit from new tax free childcare scheme, worth up to £2000 per child
- And I mentioned yesterday some of our programmes to raise girls aspirations and get more women and girls into STEM careers

### **Gender equality makes sense!**

- I echo my colleagues from the Netherlands when I say that increasing women's economic participation benefits society as a whole
- Through our work with the Women's Business Council we established the following:
  - There are currently 2.4 million women who are not working and want to work
  - And a further 1.3 million women who want to work more hours
  - By equalizing men's and women's economic participation rates we could add more than 10% to the size of the economy by 2030

### **Progress to date**

- In the UK there are more women in work than ever before – our employment rate is currently 68.1%
- More women graduates than ever before – including in STEM subjects
- We have eliminated the gender pay gap for full time employees under 40 and it continues to narrow for the over 40s
- More women led businesses than ever before

### **Conclusion**

- In all these initiatives we are working with men and boys, and this offers real potential for change. For example Lord Davies has been a tireless advocate to get more women on boards
- Twenty years ago, governments pledged to work with financial institutions, business, academics and civil society to improve the lives of women and girls everywhere.
- It is this spirit of collaboration and engagement that will ensure we do not wait another four decades to achieve gender equality.
- On Monday the UK Government will hold its Annual National Consultation with Women event, which will be attended by 120 representatives from civil society.

- We look forward to the meeting and to working with civil society on next steps to accelerate the Beijing Platform for Action and for creating a development strategy with women and girls firmly at its heart.