

## **Meeting of the UNECE Initiative on “Gender Responsive Standards”**

**the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018 – Palais des Nations**

### **Minutes of the meeting**

1. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following organizations: the British Standards Institution (BSI), the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the International Gender Champions, the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO), European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC), Swedish Standards Institute, Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB), African Regional Standardization Organization (ARSO), ISEAL Alliance, ASTM International, European Commission, the European Association for the Coordination of Consumer Representation in Standardisation (ANEC), Energy New Zealand, CQ Australia University and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
2. They represented a diverse group of stakeholders and a large pool of expertise. While introducing themselves, the participants outlined how their organizations’ work is related to the meeting. They also expressed their strong support for the initiative.
3. The discussion focused on the developments and possible adoption of the Declaration on Gender Responsive Standards. The Secretary of the Working Party recapped on the processes and discussions that had been held prior to the finalization of the declaration as well as the dialogues held within the standardization community. Then she welcomed comments from the participants about the draft declaration.
4. The representative of BSI explained that the aim of the declaration is to assist national standards bodies and standards developing organizations (NSBs and SDOs) in identifying actions they can take to support the creation of gender responsive standards. She added that the declaration is a result of two years of consultation hence, it had reached its signing phase. She then sought for ideas from the participants on how to present the declaration to the standardization community for signing. Insights on how standardization bodies were planning to implement the declaration were also welcomed.
5. She further added that, BSI was committed to signing the declaration once it was opened for signing as it would complement the BSI Gender Action Plan and other commitments of increasing diversity and inclusion within their area of activities.
6. The representative from ASTM International also acknowledged that her organization was committed to signing the declaration. Aside from this, they are also reviewing their committee services database to better track gender and discussing possible initiatives such as combining gender inclusivity with their Emerging Professional Program efforts. The declaration could also be mentioned and endorsed in the 2019 message to their executive committees.
  - a. The representative from IEC said that the Declaration would be tabled at the upcoming meeting of the ExCo (Executive Committee) and CB (Council Board in February 2019. Additionally, the declaration would also complement many of the ongoing gender equality initiatives within IEC. For example: their Young Professionals Programme which encourages the participation of women.

7. The representative from ISO commended the work done on the declaration and that it would be tabled at the ISO Council scheduled for February 2019 for review and consideration. She added that the declaration would be of great value as it would complement other ongoing activities and was supported by the ISO Secretary General becoming an International Gender Champion in 2018.
8. The representative from ARSO also committed to presenting the declaration to his organization for signing. The declaration would complement initiatives of involving African women in standardization as well as the African Union commitments to gender parity and women empowerment.
9. The representative from CENELEC also acknowledged the efforts on the declaration and would present it within her organization for signing. She also pleaded for the need to cooperate and work together to convince standardization bodies why it is important to sign the declaration.
10. It was also noted by the participants that the declaration does not only advocate for participation of women but also calls for the need to change institutional practices that involve the content and impact of standards. It was further suggested that, it would be essential to advocate for the involvement of both male and female representatives in gender initiatives within the standardization community. A representative from CQ University Australia suggested that trainings and workshops would be influential in implementing the declaration.
11. As a point of reference and complement to the previous suggestions, the WTO Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment was mentioned by the representative of the International Gender Champions. She added that, sharing of knowledge and best practices are key for implementing the declaration. Therefore, stakeholders should convene through workshops and trainings.
12. Concerns were raised on the translation of the declaration. Firstly, the issue of the French version of the declaration were raised as the language used did not conform to the message intended by the declaration. The terminologies used needed to be non-biased hence, members agreed to make the current French version available for discussion. Representatives from BSI, ISO, CENELEC and ARSO agreed to assist with translating the declaration to French.
13. As a result, a decision was made that the declaration was to be proposed for adoption at the Twenty-Eighth Session of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018.
14. A representative of the ISEAL Alliance "Gender Working Group" presented the HERProject. The presentation focused on standards, and particularly voluntary sustainability standards, can promote gender equality in supply chains. A specific area that was mentioned was gender equality in social auditing and how verification activities could be done in a gender sensitive way. The initiative involves partnerships between BSR (a global non-profit organization), the International Trade Centre (ITC), and the International Finance Cooperation (IFC).
15. Participants commented on the presentation and noted that it was important to cooperate and bring the standardization community together and involve them in such initiatives which could result into a much greater outcome.
16. The co-founder of the International Gender Champions introduced the organization as a leadership network that brings together female and male decision makers to promote gender equality. As a result, the network spearheaded the WTO Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment which has been endorsed by various WTO member states.

17. The representative from ICTSD presented about a research project on “New Thinking on Trade and Gender”. The project looks at different case studies that focus on how standards impact women. She mentioned a joint project of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World bank that will result in a publication on the linkages between on gender and trade. The WP.6 Secretary added that she would present her own research on “The Gender Dimension of the 2030 Agenda: The role of Standards” at the next webinar meeting.

18. The meeting concluded by participants agreeing to push the declaration on Gender Responsive Standards forward for signing.