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Statement

by

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at

Third UNECE International PPP Forum:

“Scaling up: Meeting the challenges of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through people-first Public-Private Partnerships” (7-9 May 2018)

Speaking notes to conclude the High-Level Debate on how the private sector can help to empower women through PPPs

Monday, 7 May 2018: 11:00 - 13:00

Salle XXI

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Colleagues,

I am very happy to see so many people debating one of our greatest challenges and something which is also very dear to my own heart - empowering women through PPP. I am committed to promoting gender equality and after taking office at UNECE, I became an International Geneva Gender Champion. It makes me very happy to see the good work done at UNECE to mainstream this topic in our sustainable development efforts, as we saw today with PPPs.

We wanted to make, at this event, a clear statement with an all-female panel. Today, the percentage of women involved in typical infrastructure projects, such as the building of roads, the designing of projects, the raising of funding, in the lending, contracting and construction industries, is very low. There is also a lack of women participating in the many related conferences - the leitmotif is sadly the very limited role played by women. We are, unfortunately, very far from the goal of gender equality as set out in SDG number five.

But this is not to say that we do not need men. On the contrary, all of us, men and women both, need to be engaged, if want to achieve the goals set out in our Guiding Principles on changing things for the better.

First, we need to improve the representation of women inside the companies undertaking PPPs, and in the PPPs themselves. This includes making sure they earn the same as their male counterparts and improving coaching and mentoring inside companies.

Secondly, we need to help women-led companies in the supply chain compete in tenders for projects: it is here that women can find opportunities to become entrepreneurs that can contribute to our society and the SDGs.

Thirdly, we need to make a difference in the communities where you do business - help women, especially girls, and train them to become the business leaders of the future. Help them acquire the skills they will need in setting up their own businesses. This will help remove the visible and invisible barriers to women's advancement in our society.

And finally, we need to help design infrastructure projects mindful of the special challenges faced by women in their daily lives: e.g. feeding and running a household, and their need to access health counselling and family planning. And let's not forget the risks women have to face on our streets and neighborhoods at night. We need to account for this via appropriate design of the lighting in street and around public areas and parks.

I commend the Guiding Principles on Promoting People first PPP for the UNSDGs. They make sound recommendations about empowering women. And, of course, there is more we can do. This is a very positive step forward and we can build on it.

The SDGs are, I am delighted to note, being increasingly understood by businesses. The support of the latter is critical if women are to be empowered and gender parity to be achieved. We need training for women entrepreneurs and we need the resources from the private sector to help us organize such training and make it successful. We need to see businesses implementing these recommendations. We need them to be champions in this campaign! The challenges are there but they can be overcome. The UN is making huge strides in gender parity and this can be a model! Finally, we need targets; let us look to recruit in the next three years 1000 companies meeting our goals and showing results on the ground, and inspiring others to do more.

Let me end by thanking the Panelists for your inspiring contributions – please continue to work with us to make a difference. And thanks also to our moderator from the BBC: we highly appreciate your contribution to this debate.

And finally, to the participants, thank you for your support. The UN is the only body inside the PPP world to give this issue prominence. We hope you will follow suit and help us more by reaching out to your own employees and businesses. We can change the world for the better.

Thank you.
