



IFUW Oral Statement - CSW59

Oral Statement by the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), a non-governmental organisation in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).¹

The International Federation of University Women (IFUW) and the co-sponsoring organisations emphasise the role of **women in the economy** as a key priority in the post-2015 agenda. Women's economic empowerment is an essential condition for sustainable development, social change and fiscal growth, requiring concerted interdisciplinary and multilateral action.

The gender gap in the economy is significant, especially within professional leadership and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Women account for 40% of the global workforce,ⁱ half are employed in vulnerable employment, often unprotected by labour legislation.ⁱⁱ Only 18.3% of top-level management are women, though boards with greater female participation yield higher returns to shareholders.ⁱⁱⁱ Marginalised women are particularly at risk of financial hardship as they are often discriminated against directly or indirectly in accessing economic opportunity. Women's participation in STEM industries, crucial to innovation and development, is of equal concern; globally, only 12% of the engineering workforce is female,^{iv} while fewer than one in three science researchers are women.^v Research shows that male-owned businesses are still significantly ahead in terms of growth and financial return. As of 2008, average revenues of majority women-owned businesses were only 27% of the average of majority men-owned businesses. This is influenced by factors such as more conservative professional goals and less access to capital, markets and networks.^{vi}

There is a widespread and persistent discrepancy in pay between women and men. In the European Union, women earn 16% less than men,^{vii} while in the US women earn on average 86 cents for every dollar earned by a man. In South Korea, the world's 12th largest economy, men earn as much as 39% more than women; in the United Kingdom, Australia and elsewhere, the gender pay gap is in fact increasing.^{viii}

¹ **Co-sponsors:** Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University; International Council of Women – Conseil International des Femmes; Soroptimist International; and International Federation of Business and Professional Women

States and societies can realise a huge socio-economic return by enabling women to access the economy. If women farmers had the same access to tools and credit as men, there would be 150 million fewer hungry people in the world.^{ix} If women's paid employment rates were raised to the same level as men's, the United States' GDP would be an estimated 9% higher, the Euro zone's 13% and Japan's 16%.^x

For all women to attain financial independence and empowerment, IFUW recommends:

- All States should formally adopt and enforce legislation to prohibit gender discrimination in the workplace, with particular focus on applying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value;
- States must provide equal access to lifelong, safe, quality education and training up to the highest levels for all girls and women, including secure learning environments. All educational policies should take into account and provide for the needs of marginalised and at-risk groups, including women with disabilities and those from indigenous, minority or migrant backgrounds or those displaced by war;
- Schools, vocational training centres and other learning institutions should include business acumen and financial literacy in the curriculum to foster entrepreneurship amongst girls and women;
- Girls should be actively encouraged to study in the areas of STEM and information and communication technologies (ICTs), which can improve the competitiveness and economies of states by increasing innovation. States should also foster partnerships with the private sector to develop mentoring and scholarship programmes in STEM and ICT;
- Educational institutions should design tertiary education curricula to incorporate flexible learning options including part-time, evening or online classes; and
- Girls and women must be provided with access to safe and decent labour conditions.

ⁱ <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/sep/29/women-better-off-far-from-equal-men>

ⁱⁱ http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un%20women_ee-thematic-brief_us-web%20pdf.ashx

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

^{iv} <http://www.sustainlabour.org/IMG/pdf/women.en.pdf>

^v <http://www.uis.unesco.org/ScienceTechnology/Pages/women-in-science-leaky-pipeline-data-viz.aspx>

^{vi} <http://www.wsi.com/articles/SB10001424052748704688604575125543191609632>

^{vii} http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_pay_gap/140319_gpg_en.pdf

^{viii} http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_324678.pdf

^{ix} <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

^x <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>