

**61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women
13-24 March 2017**

Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council.

Zonta International presents to the participants of the 61st Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women the following statement for consideration of the Commission in its deliberations on women's economic empowerment.

Zonta International is an organization pledged to empower women through service and advocacy. The Objects of Zonta International include:

- To improve the legal, political, economic, educational, health, and professional status of women at the global and local level through service and advocacy.
- To promote justice and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

During the 2016-2018 Biennium, Zonta International will invest 4 million USD in international projects in cooperation with UN agencies. All have one common denominator: self-sufficiency for women. Zonta is also during the same period investing more than 1 million USD in educational scholarships and awards.

Zonta International calls on the United Nations and its Member States to find effective short term and long term methods to ensure women's economic empowerment by providing:

- Equal access to quality education at all levels
 - More than 63 million girls are out of school. Barriers to be addressed include strong cultural norms favoring boys' education and delegating household obligations to girls, inadequate sanitation facilities in schools, unsafe school environments and gender-based violence and child marriage, among others.
- Equal access to the work place
 - The **employment rate** of women is lower than men's employment rate and, taking into account unpaid work, women work longer hours than men.
 - Women are more likely than men to **be employed part-time**. While this can help them to better balance work, household and childrearing responsibilities, part-time

jobs are often associated with lower hourly wages, less job security and less training and promotion opportunities than full-time employment.

- The **occupational segregation**: the unequal gender distribution across and within occupations is widespread and women's improved educational attainment has not solved the issue.
 - **Young women's transition** from education to the labor market is also often very difficult.
- Guarantee of appropriate and equal remuneration for work
 - The **gender wage gap**: globally, women earn only between 70 and 90 percent of what men earn. This gap cannot be explained solely by differences in education or age, and contributes to the feminization of poverty.
 - Promotion of shared responsibility for unpaid work and provision of social services and protection policies in the same area
 - Globally, women spend more than twice as much time on unpaid work than men. This division of work often depends on cultural norms, which must be addressed so that women, given the opportunity, can engage in paid work, be empowered economically and contribute to the economic well-being of their families, communities and society as a whole.
 - Equal access to banking and financial services
 - With more than 1 billion women without access to banking and financial systems, women face significant barriers to collecting and saving income, starting or growing businesses, and pulling their families out of poverty.
 - Furthermore, women in developing economies often do not own cell phones or have access to mobile technology, further excluding them from secure and convenient online banking and digital payment systems.
 - Ensuring women's rights to property, land and inheritance
 - Ownership of land and property empowers women and provides them with income and economic security. Without these resources, women have limited say in decision-making within the household and often are left even more vulnerable to domestic violence and denial of other basic rights. The Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW should both be used to underscore the importance of women's rights to land and property.
 - Women's access to decision making positions in political, economic and public life by
 - Providing educational and leadership opportunities to women and girls to ensure that there is equal access to positions of power and influence.

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- Creating a working environment that facilitates women's participation in decision-making positions.
 - Gender neutral laws
 - Gender differences in laws affect both developing and developed economies, and women in all regions. Laws that restrict the types of jobs that women can do or that allow husbands to object to their wives working are not acceptable.

Equality and empowerment of women are global issues. Women's rights are human rights and a prerequisite for poverty eradication and for a positive sustainable development.

Women's economic empowerment is fundamental to create profitability in the economy as a whole and promote social justice and equal opportunities.

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