

THE STOCKHOLM FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

# HOW DO WE ENHANCE THE VOICE OF WOMEN IN THE WORLD OF WORK – WHAT ROLE FOR SOCIAL DIALOGUE?

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## OVERVIEW

We are living in a rapidly changing world where globalisation, technological advances and digitalisation are dramatically changing how people live and work. This creates many benefits but also inequalities that have negative impacts on individuals and societies. Social dialogue, including ensuring workers' voice can be an important tool for promoting gender equality in the workplace. However, women's participation in social dialogue institutions is only 15 per cent globally (ILO). Even in industries where the work force consists primarily of women, they tend to be represented by men. This applies to developing countries and developed countries alike. It is, however, not only a question of increasing women's representation but also of making sure that relevant issues are addressed, e.g., equal pay, social security, parental leave, sexual harassment, et cetera.

This roundtable discussed the multidimensional gender perspective of social dialogue and developing social dialogue as a tool for gender equality. The panel touched on different strategies and initiatives for enhancing the gender perspective in social dialogue, including Global Deal for decent work and inclusive growth.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### Where are we?

The main goal of social dialogue is to provide equality. It's an effective tool for gender equality. Women are highly affected by power relations, and today there are only a small number of women in leading positions.

In Macedonia there are no trade union organisations linked to civil society and only ten per cent of the leading positions in trade unions are held by women.

Social dialogue has been weakened in many countries. Union membership numbers have decreased. Social dialogue is an effective tool in a democratisation process.

In 2014 Tunisia adopted a new constitution and introduced democratic elections. 60 per cent of doctors and 40 per cent of judges in Tunisia are women, but they are not represented on the boards.

### **What are we doing?**

The OECD has created guidelines for multinational enterprises recognising that social dialogue is a pillar of responsible business conduct. The principle of the guidelines is to encourage enterprises to engage in and support social dialogue on responsible supply chain management. Social dialogue is at the heart of the non-judicial grievance mechanism of the guidelines – the National Contact Point (NCP) mechanism – with a key role to provide good offices to address and resolve issues arising during the implementation of the guidelines. Since 2000, over 400 cases have been received by NCPs concerning issues that have been brought up by over 100 countries. The majority of cases concern social dialogue, for example employment and industrial relation. Social dialogue has been a crucial tool in resolving cases.

In Tunisia national social dialogue was initiated after working with social dialogue in other settings. In 2017 the parliament adopted a law creating the National Council for Social Dialogue. Through social dialogue, Tunisia is starting to deal with problems in different industries. Initiatives are taken to give women training in how to step up and speak out about their needs, demands and rights.

ILO is working on factory level with some of the most controversial industries in the world, in Asia. Due to the implementation of social dialogue, a positive trend is seen in many of these factories, especially when looking at areas such as a decrease of sexual harassment and reduced salary gaps. Further, ILO is working with recruitment with focus on women and trying to support more women to be employed at leading positions in the industries.

Programmes for women leaders are offered, including coaching for them to become stronger in their professional role and as leaders.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Where do we go from here?**

- Working with quotas can be an effective tool in the process of working towards change. It is also important to showcase success and to have both women and men role models for gender equality.
- Setting clear goals and targets.
- Seats in leading positions need to be given to women.
- Increase of women's representation on boards and in unions is vital.
- Establish a broader definition on what a quality job is in order to strengthen women's positions in the labour market.
- Improve the working conditions in many of the labour areas dominated by women.
- Respond to specific working conditions for women.
- An international perspective is needed – bringing the cooperation to different countries and governments as well as to businesses and unions.
- Engage governments to create legislative mechanisms for social dialogue.

- Bring men into the discussion about gender issues in the workspace.
- Gender equality needs to be on top of the agenda for companies that want to be sustainable.
- Create a new culture of recruitment that is equal for men and women.
- Make women visible and inspire them to go for studies and careers – and also improve their self-confidence. ■

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