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Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**

Background

Women's empowerment and gender equality are vital to building fair, inclusive, prosperous and peaceful societies everywhere. These are a key part of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

SDG 5 calls on us to achieve gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls by 2030 – a deadline that is fast approaching. It has been 29 years since the "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. However, its implementation remains insufficient. According to gender statistics, major challenges faced by women include increasing their participation in the decision-making process, promoting women's employment, and enhancing their economic capabilities.

Building a world free of gender inequality is our shared goal, and it is our collective duty and responsibility to collaborate in its realization. The world must realize that women's participation and leadership are indispensable in solving the most pressing issues such as climate change, poverty.

The United Nations Charter mandates the respect and support of the rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals, without discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, or religion. Furthermore, the creation of the Commission on the Status of Women shortly after the establishment of the United Nations, is an indication of the UN's leadership and pioneership in this area.

Objective

Mongolia, as a nation, has embedded in its Constitution a commitment to human rights, freedom, justice, and the promotion of gender equality across political, social, cultural, and economic domains. Moreover, 2024 signifies the centennial celebration of the founding of the Mongolian Women's Federation. Hence, the Government of Mongolia proposes to convene the World Women's Forum under the auspices of the President of Mongolia, H.E.Mr.Khurelsukh Ukhnaa, with the aim of holding a constructive dialogue on the importance of women's empowerment, gender equality, climate change, and the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Preparations has proceeded to organize the Forum in cooperation with partner countries and international organizations, including the United Nations.

Agenda

Main part of the Forum consists of opening session, plenary meeting, closing session and following six thematic sessions:

Thematic session 1: Women leaders accelerating environmental action (UN Women, UNEP)

Gender inequality coupled with climate change is the defining threat of our times, and global action to respond to and address environmental changes justly for people and the planet is urgent.

Gender inequalities exacerbate the impacts of climate change for women and girls; for example, UN Women and UN DESA estimate that in a worst-case climate scenario, by 2050, more 158 million women and girls globally may be pushed into poverty. Women's leadership and full, equal and meaningful participation is paramount to ensuring inclusive environmental action and resilience building.

As we move towards the Summit of the Future in 2024 and Beijing+30, it is now more critical than ever to underscore the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment in all in our efforts on environmental action. The "triple planetary crisis" of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution need to be tackled as a global community and we need to ensure no one is left behind.

Thematic session 2: Sustainable Future: Role of Women in Shaping Food Systems (FAO, IOM, WHO)

The role of women in shaping food systems is indispensable for achieving a sustainable future. Their roles span from production and processing to distribution and consumption, making them critical actors in addressing the interconnected challenges of food security, malnutrition, health, climate resilience, and human mobility. By empowering women, we can catalyze significant progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite their extensive contributions, women's efforts have often been overlooked or undervalued. It is crucial to recognize and celebrate their invaluable work and to support them in assuming more leadership positions.

Women are essential for food security and nutrition within households and communities, influencing dietary patterns as primary caregivers. Empowering women in agriculture increases food diversity and availability, bolstering food security. Women's health, linked to family and community well-being, benefits from education on nutrition and health, preventing diseases. Women also play key roles in agricultural value chains but face barriers to land, credit, and markets. Addressing these barriers boosts productivity and economic growth. Additionally, women's traditional knowledge and innovative practices are crucial for climate resilience and sustainable production.

Thematic session 3: Towards Gender Equal Economies (UNDP)

Achieving gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 requires substantive reforms in current economic structures. Taxation and fiscal policies can perpetuate inequalities and reinforce gender norms, but they can also play a crucial role in shaping gender equality and power dynamics. An increasing number of countries are working to understand better the relationship between the SDGs, gender equality, tax, and fiscal policies and to conduct structural reforms towards gender-equal economies. Mongolia is one of the pioneer countries in the Asia Pacific region embarking on the structural alignment of its fiscal policies with gender equality aim supported by UNDP.

Private capital and financial institutions also play a significant role in achieving the SDGs and gender equality. Mongolia's focus on private capital has included considering how to create access to capital from women entrepreneurs through loans, investments, and debt capital to ensuring private financial institutions are gender responsive themselves.

Thematic session 4: The importance of education in empowering women and girls, and its impact (UNICEF, UNFPA)

Education enables women and girls to assume responsibility in decision-making process and empowerment not only in the family but also in the external environment. Education is important for women to understand their right to be treated equally in society same as men.

Going beyond “traditional education” to primarily explore “: i) The challenges and solutions for girls participating in STEM education and careers in the Asia-Pacific region and the need for increased govt investments in this regard; ii) The need for comprehensive definitions, regulatory guidelines, frameworks and legislations on online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (OTFGBV,; and, iii) Engage young people and community stakeholders meaningfully via gender-transformative approaches in CSE curriculum development. The session will also Identify good practices and lessons learned from the Asia-Pacific region in general that focus on the above 3 components in building a more inclusive, just and sustainable future via exploring solutions for empowering women and girls.

Thematic session 5: Gender Equality in Sports, Arts, and Culture (UNESCO)

Sports serve as a powerful platform for promoting social inclusion and gender equality. Female athletes have made great impacts in breaking barriers and inspiring change. In many countries, female athletes continue to excel and advocate for equality, making significant strides in their respective fields. However, women in sports often face intersectional vulnerabilities, especially those from marginalized communities. They are subjected to gendered harassment, both online and offline, and face restrictions on their freedom to participate and express themselves. Precarious working conditions, unequal pay, and lack of adequate support further exacerbate their challenges.

In the culture and the art sector, female professionals are often subjected to gendered harassment, censorship, intimidation, and defamation campaigns both in the digital and physical realms. They are frequently targeted with accusations of indecency, blasphemy, or violations of public order and morals, which are used to curtail their artistic freedom. Women artists not only have their freedom of expression threatened for their work but also for their public opinions, personal attire, and activism.

Cultural heritage, arts, sports at the same time are instrumental in addressing gender inequality by challenging stereotypes and promoting diverse narratives. By highlighting women's historical contributions and using the arts to share their stories, these sectors can shift societal norms and raise awareness about gender issues.

Thematic session 6: Women in Digital Economy (Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, UNESCAP)

In the global landscape, enhancing female economic participation is critical for achieving both gender equality and economic prosperity. The global female economic participation rate for women is just over 50% compared to 80% for men. In East Asia and Pacific the female economic participation rate is 44.2% whilst in Mongolia 53.4%.

In Mongolia, women play pivotal roles in business leadership, heading 24% of top 100 companies, 60% of SMEs, and roughly 85% of small to micro enterprises as of 2023. However, they encounter significant challenges, including disproportionate time spent on unpaid work, limited access to finance due to collateral often being in the male household member's name, and low digital and financial literacy, especially in rural areas.

Efforts to address these challenges require collaboration among policymakers, the private sector, civil society, academia, and international organizations. The integration of digitalization within the economic framework offers promising solutions, reducing operational costs, expanding business horizons, improving efficiencies, and accessing broader markets. These initiatives not only bolster women's participation in the economy but also enhance societal well-being.

Expected Outcome

The Forum will provide a platform for women leaders in all aspects to engage and build momentum towards the 30th Anniversary of the adoption of the "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action". The Forum will adopt an outcome document with recommendations from the thematic sessions.

Participants

Women leaders from all aspects, including Heads of States and Governments, Foreign Ministers, Ministers, Heads of international organizations and international NGOs, UN good will Ambassadors, as well as businesswomen, artists and athletes participate in the Forum.