



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
22 November 2016

Original: English

---

### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Sixty-first session

13-24 March 2017

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo and Global Foundation for Democracy and Development, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

---

\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

The economic empowerment of women is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and moving forward from the Millennium Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals have showcased a more comprehensive gender dimension, having integrated this in a range of areas from poverty eradication to employment and sustainable production. While participants shared positive experiences on women's economic independence during the second meeting of the United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, Luiza Carvalho, Regional Director of UN Women for the Americas and the Caribbean reminded participants that women in Latin America are still underrepresented in scientific and technological circles, underscoring the need for governments and other stakeholders to implement projects that can address this imbalance.

Indeed, women struggle to gain access to the labour market. In the regional report "Decent Work and Equal Gender" developed jointly by Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Women in November 2013, the 9.1% rate of unemployment for women in Latin America and the Caribbean is 1.4 times that of men. Moreover, the latest edition of the 2016 ILO regional office report entitled *Panorama Laboral* stresses that after a steady rise over the last few years, the rate of participation of women in the labour force, has reached 49.5% and an employment rate of 45.5%. However, these figures remain lower than those of men with rates of 71.3% and 67.3% respectively.

Lorenzo Jiménez de Luis, UNDP Resident Coordinator for the Dominican Republic stated in the June 2016 report "Mapping and Gender Analysis" developed with the Office of the Vice President, that gender inequality is a threat to sustainable human development. The report offers practical socio economic recommendations including the need to increase synergies between ministerial departments such as the Ministry of Women's Affairs and local offices, to avoid fragmentation of resources and promote innovative social policies that reduce gender inequality. Given the obvious underrepresentation of women in technology, women's knowledge and experience in relation to the use of these tools is not considered.

Because of this, women's potential as agents of change in driving innovative solutions that bring about sustainable development remain untapped. One of the key focuses of the report therefore, and a priority area for the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development and Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo, has been to deliver programs that reverse the above mentioned employment statistics.

Within the UNDP report, the 92 Community Technology Centres which, implemented throughout the country by the Office of the Vice President, have been targeted at some of the poorest areas of the country to promote community development but also enhance women's access to technology, their employability, inclusion in society, helping to redress the gender balance that is needed to ensure the success of Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 on quality education and gender equality. Benefitting 75,000 people, the centres' training courses like the Women's Network Program, advance gender equality in knowledge, promoting

access of young Dominican women with limited resources to technology and enabling training opportunities in specialized areas of information technology. The TecnoChicas initiative also targets young girls aged between 12 and 20 years old and seeking to close the digital divide in the country, and providing young girls with the best opportunity to pursue their interests in a career in information technology, in line with Sustainable Development Goal target 5.5.

Since 2013, further gender equality efforts have been made, including a 2014 agreement between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and UNDP in 2014 looking to develop a management system for gender equality in private sector organizations. But more needs to be done if we are to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

As civil society organizations that promote the sustainable development of the Dominican Republic, Global Foundation for Democracy and Development and Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo argue the need for policies that assure long term gender equality and women's empowerment through access to education, economic opportunities, and full participation of women in society. They have collaborated on the Globo Verde Dominicano Award, the only national competition in Dominican Republic that recognizes and encourages the production of short films, public service and photographic works on the environment. Through this annual contest, they have promoted the role of women in environmental film and seen their numbers increase over the last three years with 12 women directors out of 28 present at this year's competition. Furthermore, 25 women out of 68 participated in the overall production of the short films from audio-visual technicians to screenwriters.

The foundations have hosted for the last 6 years the annual Dominican Republic Environmental Film Festival, to raise awareness and deepen understanding of environmental issues among Dominican audiences, while celebrating the Dominican Republic's natural heritage. Through this flagship initiative, Global Foundation for Democracy and Development and Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo have promoted the inclusion of women in environmental protection issues and the process of technical film making with workshops delivered by other professionals within the film industry on topics ranging from environmental journalism to lessons in film directing. Since 2011, the festival has become a six-day program, with over 140 screenings in over 40 venues in 11 cities. Since then, the foundations have promoted a 40% increase in women's participation. Separate to this, the staff of the festival which counts 100 volunteers, includes 70% of women and 45% of which continue to play an active role in the film industry.

In addition to providing technical knowledge and skills to women environmental film makers, the foundations also seek to highlight the crucial role of technology in education for sustainable development. Global Foundation for Democracy and Development and Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo therefore began a teacher training course in 2004 entitled "Education and Technologies for Education" focusing on Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the classroom. The course provides certification to teachers on technology inclusion strategies. The program was developed with the Ministry of education, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and technology, several Dominican universities and Microsoft. Through this course, they have assisted in training more

than 35,000 teachers, mainly women, in the use of ICT as an education tool and encouraged teachers to take part in international competitions, with the aim to highlight effective teaching projects taking place throughout the country. 10 Dominican teachers, 7 of which were women, took part in these competitions between 2010 and 2015. Upon their return to work, they became educational leaders in their communities, promoting the full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership for women in political, economic, and public life in line with the spirit of Sustainable Development Goal 5.5.

On an individual basis, Dominican women are also leading the way to promote gender equality and entrepreneurship. Paola Santana, a former lawyer from the Dominican Republic, founded Matternet in 2011, a start-up company which uses electric drone technology to provide postal services. Partnering with agencies like the UNICEF or the World Health Organization in developing countries, her drones connect rural communities to markets, alleviating poverty and delivering badly needed supplies and medicines. Leading the fight against disabilities, and another trail blazer for women's empowerment is Francina Hungria, a young woman who was victim of gun violence which left her blind, but yet founded Fundación Francina Hungría which recently launched the "A Cane for You, a Place for Everyone" campaign that promotes White Cane Safety for people living with visual disabilities so they can lead safe and independent lives.

Such examples of leadership prove that women's empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and pro-poor growth. Achieving it requires a holistic approach and gender-specific perspectives to be integrated at the design stage of policy and programming. As we have demonstrated, innovative partnerships between civil society, government and the private sector can help to redress this gender balance in areas such as access to technology and new media forms, to bring about sustainable development. This approach to development, if integrated with principles of environmental sustainability (like the Dominican Republic Environmental Film Festival workshops), can go a long way to overcome these inequalities and successfully achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Developments.

This statement is supported by Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo and Global Foundation for Democracy and Development.

---