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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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review theme: women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work

Review of the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides a review of the implementation by Member States of the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-first session, held in 2017, on women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work. The review was conducted in rapidly shifting global and national contexts for realizing gender equality and women’s economic empowerment, more than half a decade after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The repercussions of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continue to deepen gender gaps and inequalities in the world of work, disrupting development efforts and pushing women and girls further behind, highlighting the need for urgent and accelerated investment and action.

* E/CN.6/2022/1.



I. Introduction

1. At the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Member States agreed on new working methods for the Commission (see Economic and Social Council resolution [2015/6](#)), which included a more rigorous review of the agreed conclusions relating to a priority theme from a previous session in order to encourage the implementation of its outcomes. As part of the review process, the Commission considers a report on progress made on the theme at the national level.

2. The review theme of the Commission at its sixty-sixth session is “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”, in accordance with its multi-year programme of work for the period 2021–2024 (see Council resolution [2020/15](#)). The Commission had adopted agreed conclusions on that theme at its sixty-first session, held in 2017 (see [E/2017/27](#)).

3. The present report serves to assess the implementation by Member States of the agreed conclusions on the theme “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” over the past five years, including their actions in the following areas: strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks; strengthening education, training and skills development; implementing economic and social policies for women’s economic empowerment; addressing the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers; managing technological and digital change for women’s economic empowerment; strengthening women’s collective voice, leadership and decision-making; and strengthening the role of the private sector in women’s economic empowerment. The impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on women’s economic empowerment are also addressed.

4. The report is informed by the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on the twenty-fifth anniversary of its adoption (see [E/CN.6/2020/3](#)) and by information received from Member States¹ and other sources, including the reports of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. The present report will be accompanied by presentations given by Member States on a voluntary basis at the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on lessons learned, challenges and best practices.

II. Context for the implementation of the agreed conclusions

6. The 25-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action showed that despite progress on reducing gender gaps and inequalities, achievements have not met the commitments Member States made in 1995 and regression has taken place in some areas. Inequalities in wealth and income have increased in and between developed and developing countries to levels higher than 25 years ago, with women and girls disproportionately affected (see [E/CN.6/2020/3](#)). With the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, the global economy has faced unprecedented challenges and uncertainties even after a decade of crisis, recession, indebtedness, fiscal austerity and deepening inequalities. The economic,

¹ Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, France, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovenia, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

social and health ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic have compounded the intensifying impacts of the climate and environmental crises, pushing people, and particularly women and girls, further behind. The world is increasingly unlikely to attain the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, adding further urgency to the decade of action and the ambition expressed in *Our Common Agenda*.

7. Global poverty rose in 2020 for the first time in over two decades, with 97 million people falling into extreme poverty in the wake of the pandemic.² Poverty induced by the pandemic remains a reality in 2021 although there is significant uncertainty about its magnitude, given the ongoing waves of virus resurgence, lack of global vaccination, soaring debt levels, rising food prices, massive losses of jobs and livelihoods and weakened social protection systems that have left the poorest unprotected. Inequalities among countries are critical as poverty is expected to decline in 2021 in high- and middle-income countries but further increase in low-income countries and in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the pandemic worsening poverty in poor and fragile countries.³

8. The gender poverty gap is widening as the pandemic wreaks havoc with women's already precarious economic security, such that more women than men are being pushed into extreme poverty. The total number of women and girls living on less than \$1.90 a day is likely to reach 435 million in 2021, up from 398.5 million in 2019.⁴ In particular, women between 25 and 34 years of age are more likely than men to live in extreme poverty, an age span that coincides with the increased expenses of family formation while women's unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities constrain their access to paid work. In 2021, it is expected that 118 women aged 25 to 34, compared with 100 men in the same age bracket, will be living in extreme poverty globally, and this ratio could rise to 121 poor women for every 100 poor men by 2030.⁵

9. The gender food security gap also widened significantly from 6 per cent in 2019 to 10 per cent in 2020 as pandemic-related disruptions of food and nutrition systems and rising food prices caused more women and girls to confront hunger and undernourishment. Globally, nearly a third of the world's peoples (2.37 billion) faced moderate to severe food insecurity in 2020, 320 million more than in 2019.⁶

10. The global gender gap in labour force participation was stubbornly persistent at 31 per cent between 1998 and 2018 and the gender pay gap remains on average 20 per cent (*ibid.*). The gender labour force participation gap between prime-age men and women (25 to 54 years old), however, may be even larger, at 43 per cent, although with significant regional variations. Virtually all prime-age men participate in the labour force at 95 per cent compared with 52 per cent of prime-age women. This stark difference can be attributed above all to women's disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, which increases with marriage and more so with children.⁷ Even before the pandemic, women did on average three times more unpaid care and domestic work than men and this has dramatically increased over the past two years.

² Daniel Gerszon Mahler and others, "Updated estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty: turning the corner on the pandemic in 2021?", World Bank Blogs, 24 June 2021.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Ginette Azcona and others, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2021* (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021).

⁵ Ginette Azcona and others, *From Insights to Action: Gender Equality in the Wake of COVID-19* (UN-Women, 2020).

⁶ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.21/I.3).

⁷ Rosina Gammarano, "Having kids sets back women's labour force participation more so than getting married", ILOSTAT blog (International Labour Organization (ILO), 3 March 2020).

Owing to COVID-19 containment measures, lockdowns and school and care centre closures, the burgeoning volume of unpaid care and domestic work continues to be carried out by women and girls, squeezing women out of the labour force.⁸

11. Despite efforts to increase women's financial inclusion by supporting their financial and digital literacy and access to mobile banking, the gender gap in account ownership remained at 9 per cent through 2017,⁹ and evidence indicates negative progress on gender parity in financial inclusion since 2015.¹⁰ Women continue to have less access than men to digital technology and to science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields, with repercussions for women's participation in the digital economy and their capacity to meet the challenges posed by automation for the future of work. By 2030 an estimated 40 million to 160 million women will need to transition across occupations, often into jobs requiring new and improved skills.¹¹

12. Remote work, often on digital labour platforms, can facilitate income-generation for women, including migrant women, women with disabilities and young women with care responsibilities. Four out of 10 workers are women on online web-based platforms, dropping to 2 in 10 in developing countries, resulting from the same difficulties that women face in securing work offline, including lack of education and skills, discrimination and harassment.¹² The increase in remote work during the pandemic has spurred a higher risk of online workplace violence, harassment and cyberbullying.¹³

13. The COVID-19 crisis has deepened gender inequalities in the world of work, decimating economic sectors where women workers are overrepresented and causing a shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls.¹⁴ Globally, 40 per cent of all employed women work in hard-hit sectors, including accommodation and food services; wholesale and retail trade; real estate, business and administrative activities; and manufacturing.¹⁵ Across regions and income categories, employment losses were 5 per cent higher for women than men of the total global losses in 2020 of 114 million jobs relative to 2019.¹⁶

14. For the 740 million women in the informal economy with little or no social protection, including essential workers and domestic workers, the pandemic has brought on debilitating economic hardship in the form of increasing poverty, food insecurity, asset depletion and indebtedness.¹⁷ Self-employed workers, especially in the informal economy, have suffered disproportionately as income support and other measures have been ineffective in protecting livelihoods beyond the short term; this

⁸ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021* (see footnote 6); see also Bobo Diallo, Seemin Qayum and Silke Staab, "COVID-19 and the care economy: immediate action and structural transformation for a gender-responsive recovery", Policy Brief No. 16 (UN-Women, 2020).

⁹ Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), Women's financial inclusion: closing the gender gap (n.d.).

¹⁰ Mekala Krishnan and others (McKinsey Global Institute), "Ten things to know about gender equality", 21 September 2020.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2021: The Role of Digital Labour Platforms in Transforming the World of Work* (Geneva, 2021).

¹³ ILO, "ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190): 12 ways it can support the COVID-19 response and recovery", May 2020.

¹⁴ Jade Cochran and others, "Addressing the economic fallout of COVID-19: pathways and policy options for a gender-responsive recovery", Policy Brief No. 15 (UN-Women, 2020); see also UN-Women, "COVID-19 and violence against women and girls: addressing the shadow pandemic", Policy Brief No. 17, 2020.

¹⁵ ILO, "ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work", 2nd ed. (Geneva, 2020).

¹⁶ ILO, "ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work", 7th ed. (Geneva, 2021).

¹⁷ Silke Staab and others, *Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice* (UN-Women, 2021).

has also been the case for women, young workers, and low- and medium-skilled workers, who have the least resilience to recover from the devastating effects of the crisis.¹⁸ Care and health workers, of whom women represent the vast majority, have received increased recognition during the pandemic; this has not, however, for the most part, been reflected in higher wages and improved working conditions.¹⁹

15. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for women's economic empowerment and its economic and social fallout could well reverse progress made on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Virtually all countries have taken measures to contain the virus, to shore up collapsing health and social security systems and to keep economies, institutions and households afloat through fiscal stimulus and economic recovery packages. However, the bulk of these packages are not designed with a gender lens and most measures are gender blind. According to the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, which analyses nearly 5,000 of these measures across 226 countries and territories, 1,605 measures are gender-sensitive, of which 853 in 163 countries focus on violence against women and girls, 526 in 161 countries strengthen women's economic security and 226 in 93 countries address unpaid care work.²⁰

16. Women's economic participation, decision-making and leadership are key to their empowerment, but they remain largely excluded from spaces of power; women make up 39 per cent of the world's workers but hold only 28.2 per cent of managerial positions, a mere 3 per cent increase since 2000.²¹ The pandemic has exposed the enduring unequal relations of power between men and women and the constraints on women's economic empowerment, security and autonomy in private and public life. Women should be equitably represented in decision-making and leadership in the context of the pandemic; economic recovery packages should also be gender-responsive and allow for the creation of decent jobs in the green and blue economies to build a better and sustainable future for all. Women, however, are strikingly underrepresented in the task forces created by Governments in response to the pandemic. Women make up just 24 per cent of members of the 242 task forces with available data, and 10 per cent of all task forces have no women members. Women lead only 18 per cent of 414 task forces across 186 countries, 83 per cent of which are dominated by men and only 7 per cent achieve gender parity.²²

17. In this challenging context, the agreed conclusions of the Commission at its sixty-first session and the recommended actions for achieving women's economic empowerment in the world of work are highly relevant.

III. National implementation efforts

18. Since the adoption of the agreed conclusions in 2017, Member States have proceeded with their implementation to different degrees and at paces that have intensified with the economic and social fallout caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. They have provided examples of good practices and innovative mechanisms to realize women's rights to work and at work and to support their economic empowerment in challenging circumstances for the world of work.

¹⁸ ILO, ILO Monitor (see footnote 16).

¹⁹ Silke Staab, *Beyond COVID-19* (see footnote 17).

²⁰ UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, Global Factsheet, 11 November 2021.

²¹ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021* (see footnote 6).

²² UN-Women, UNDP and the University of Pittsburgh, "Women remain absent: COVID-19 task force participation", Factsheet, 15 November 2021.

A. Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks

19. The agreed conclusions emphasize enacting, strengthening and enforcing normative, legal and policy frameworks to ensure gender equality and prohibit discrimination against women in the world of work. The full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the adoption and national implementation of international labour conventions and standards are critical in this regard.

20. Member States have made significant progress in advancing gender equality and eliminating gender-based discrimination in the world of work through the promulgation or amendment of laws and policy frameworks (Argentina, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, France, Georgia, Honduras, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Senegal, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand, and Turkey).

21. Argentina established the Ministry for Women, Genders and Diversity (2019), created the National Plan for Equality in Diversity (2021–2023) and enacted the National Law on the Promotion of Formal Employment for Transvestite, Transsexual and Transgender People (2020). Belarus amended the Law on Employment (2020) to expand guarantees for working single parents and those raising children with disabilities. Labour laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018) prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender, marital status, family obligations and pregnancy, and provide for access to justice in cases of discrimination. The National Strategy for Promotion of Equality between Women and Men (2021–2030) of Bulgaria focuses on equality between women and men in the labour market, equal economic independence and reducing gender pay and income gaps. In Egypt, the Ministry of Manpower decrees (2021) lifted restrictions on women working at night and in specific industries and professions while ensuring protection and safety measures. Georgia amended its Labour Code (2020) to prohibit direct and indirect discrimination, provide for equal opportunities and equal treatment, including equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and improve maternity and parental leave. In Kyrgyzstan, the National Development Strategy (2018–2040) calls for the integration of gender equality, and environmental and technological dimensions in all programmes. The reform of the Federal Labour Law (2019) in Mexico expands labour rights and obliges employers to prevent gender-based discrimination, violence and sexual harassment. Senegal adopted a national strategy for women’s economic empowerment (2020).

22. Discriminatory social norms and structural barriers that marginalize women and girls have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.²³ In Ecuador, the National Council for Gender Equality issued guidelines for adoption and implementation on gender-responsive public policies in response to the health crisis and on strategic actions by public sector institutions to facilitate women’s economic empowerment in response to job and income losses and intensification of unpaid care and domestic work (2020).

23. Member States have taken steps to realize women’s rights and address gender-based discrimination in the world of work, specifically to enact, strengthen and enforce laws, policies and regulations that uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value in the public and private sectors (Austria, Bahrain, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, France, Georgia,

²³ Azcona and others, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals* (see footnote 4).

Germany, India, Ireland, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mongolia, Peru, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Switzerland and Thailand). Several countries reported their membership in the Equal Pay International Coalition, a multi-stakeholder partnership led by the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which aims to achieve equal pay for women and men and reduce the gender pay gap at the global, regional and national levels (Costa Rica, Georgia, Jordan, Luxembourg and Ukraine).

24. In Austria, the One Hundred Percent Project (2020–2022) supports companies in reducing pay discrimination by implementing fair and transparent salary systems. In Germany, private employers with more than 500 employees are required to implement binding company procedures to review and establish equal pay; in addition, the minimum wage is being raised incrementally to €10.45 per hour on 1 July 2022, with women being the majority who benefit (57 per cent), another contribution to reducing the gender pay gap. The Gender Pay Gap Information Act (2021) of Ireland requires firms with 250 or more employees to calculate and publish information on the gender pay gap; this threshold will decline to 50 employees when the legislation is fully operational. In Luxembourg, employers are fined between €251 and €25,000 for gender-based pay differences. In Switzerland, all companies covered by the revised Federal Act on Gender Equality (2020) are required to perform an initial equal pay analysis by 30 June 2021; free, anonymous and secure equal pay analysis web tools are available.

25. Member States have enacted, strengthened and enforced laws and policies to eliminate violence and harassment against women in the world of work and provide means of redress (Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Georgia, Germany, Honduras, Hungary, Ireland, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Morocco, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand and Zimbabwe).

26. Argentina, Hungary and Mozambique reported on ratification or adoption of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), to end gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work. The “Qualitas 190” programme (2021) in Argentina provides tools to employers to prevent and address violence and harassment in the world of work.

27. The Plurinational State of Bolivia has established procedures for victims of workplace harassment to file complaints with the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Welfare (2021). Mechanisms and protocols for prevention and protection against gender-based violence and sexual harassment in public and private institutions and workplaces have been put in place by Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019), Ecuador (2020), El Salvador (2020) and Georgia (2020). Antigua and Barbuda (2020) and Ecuador (2021) are raising awareness about public and private sector workplace sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

28. In Ireland, the document entitled *Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions* (2020), is focused on institutional cultures and policies. Denmark amended the Equal Treatment Act (2019) such that to specify the scope of sexual harassment, a specific workplace culture cannot excuse a toxic environment. Also in 2019, the Danish Working Environment Authority issued guidelines that enjoin employers to prevent physical and mental disturbance due to harassment and sexual harassment by promoting cultural change in the workplace.

29. In France, the French Development Agency funds projects on preventing and combating sexist and sexual violence at work in developing countries that encourage companies and professional circles to change behaviour, make victims aware of their rights to claim and enforce them and organize appropriate responses so that victims are heard and supported.

30. Preventing and ending violence against women and girls has taken on increased urgency with the spiralling violence in the wake of lockdowns and stay-at-home containment measures resulting from the pandemic. Reporting Member States have acted to stem the shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls through the provision of essential services in conjunction with support for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. In 2021, Austria approved €24.6 million for a package of measures on violence prevention, protection and response, and Bosnia and Herzegovina provides grants to non-governmental organizations for services to victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence that also strengthen women's economic security. Costa Rica highlights the co-responsibility of the private sector in the prevention and referral of cases of violence against women. Honduras and Suriname are conducting communication campaigns on gender-based violence and violence against women in the context of the pandemic.

B. Strengthening education, training and skills development

31. The agreed conclusions call for promoting and protecting women's and girls' right to education throughout the life cycle by ensuring universal access to gender-responsive quality education, training and career development and securing the transition from education or unemployment to work, with particular attention to enabling pregnant adolescents, young mothers and single mothers to complete their education.

32. Member States are mainstreaming a gender perspective into education and training programmes to facilitate the transition from education or unemployment to work (Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Colombia, Croatia, Equatorial Guinea, Georgia, Germany, Honduras, India, Ireland, Jordan, Latvia, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, Poland, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname and Turkey). Some Member States have developed such programmes specifically to ensure that girls stay in or return to school in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. A cash-based intervention project launched in Tchaourou, Benin, in 2020, helps to keep young girls in school. In Germany, the SHE – Support Her Education initiative, implemented through the Global Partnership for Education, is aimed at ensuring that girls return to school to complete their education after the school closures caused by the pandemic.

33. In 2021, Colombia offered technical assistance to secretaries of education, training for teachers and counsellors, and workshops for students that reflected the mainstreaming of gender perspectives aimed at helping them to analyse and overcome stereotypes about occupational segregation and gender-based discrimination in the world of work. Through a plan on the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men (2021–2023), young people in Latvia are introduced to the challenges of occupational segregation and future employment beyond gender stereotypes, promoting the acquisition of programming skills for girls and encouraging boys to consider careers in education and care work. In Nigeria, the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (2020) is expected to improve secondary school opportunities for 6.7 million adolescent girls in seven states. In Poland, the national employment programme and National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (2019–2024), help women to

enter the world of work through rapid response training in job skills, industrial on the job training, vocational training, skills conversion training and professional internships for university graduates. An e-training programme in Saudi Arabia assists women in developing job skills to access the labour market; women's participation was 53.8 per cent in the second quarter of 2021.

C. Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment

34. The agreed conclusions emphasize protecting women's rights to work and at work through policies and measures that ensure women's full and productive employment and decent work, expand inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems, including floors, reduce and redistribute women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, enhance gender statistics on the formal and informal economy, and significantly increase investment to close resource gaps.

35. Member States have promoted decent work and expanded or strengthened social protection and care systems and measures. The Decent Work Country Programme (2018–2022) of Jordan is aimed at articulating the commitments of the Government, workers' and employers' organizations and the International Labour Organization to promote decent work, social justice and equity. In India, the Code on Social Security (2020) serves to extend social security to all employees and workers in the organized and unorganized sectors. Social Protection Law (2021) in Morocco is aimed at reforming the social protection system over the next five years by increasing the beneficiaries of basic compulsory health insurance, generalizing family allowances and broadening the membership base of pension plans.

36. Antigua and Barbuda participates in a programme of the United Nations Development Programme on enabling gender-responsive disaster recovery, climate and environmental resilience in the Caribbean, in recognition of the fact that climate and environmental crises and disasters compound existing gender inequalities and that women and girls face difficulties in accessing economic participation. The programme is aimed at alleviating inequalities, prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable in climate change adaptation and mitigation in key sectors, increasing livelihood resilience and providing social protection finance tools and income support to women-headed households.

37. In 2020, Argentina created an interministerial task force on care policies to work towards a more just social organization of care, redistributing care tasks between the genders, in the family and in society, and recognizing care as a necessity, as work and as a right. It also created a drafting commission for a law on an integral care system from a gender and diversity perspective. The national care policy (2019) of Colombia brings together 25 governmental entities to advance access to social protection and intersectoral care policies that guarantee the rights of the persons who undertake care tasks and those who receive care. The national care policy (2021–2031) of Costa Rica is intended to close gender gaps in labour and employment.

38. In Austria, the Federal Long-term Care Benefit Act is aimed at ensuring that people who require nursing care can obtain the care and support they need to lead independent lives. In 2020 over 467,000 persons received long-term care benefits in cash, two-thirds of them women. A monthly home care subsidy of up to €1100 for employees and €550 for self-employed providers of care benefitted some 6,700 men and 17,300 women in 2020.

39. In Germany, under the Act on Good Early Childhood Education and Care (2019), the Government is investing €5.5 billion to expand and improve the quality of day-care facilities and services and increase the number of children served through staggered parental contributions and fee exemptions for low-income families. Through the Full-time Care Act (2021), a legal entitlement to full-time care for primary school children is being gradually introduced, beginning on 1 August 2026. The Code on Social Security (2020) of India mandates a crèche facility in establishments with more than 50 employees. In Ireland, the National Childcare Scheme (2019) offers child-care subsidies for babies as young as 24 weeks and children up to 15 years of age. The Republic of Korea has expanded eligibility, service hours and subsidies for public childcare services yearly since 2017. Through its income tax law (2018), Turkey provides an income tax exemption for nursery support, and private sector investments in nurseries, kindergartens and day-care centres are eligible for regional support.

40. Member States are promoting decent paid care and domestic work in the public and private sectors. Regarding paid domestic work, several countries have introduced laws and regulations to improve working conditions (Mexico, Morocco and Republic of Korea), raise wages (Argentina and Mexico), set a minimum wage (Mexico and Switzerland), establish standard formal employment contracts (Mongolia and Switzerland), set a minimum age and prohibit recruitment of minors (Morocco), allow domestic workers to register and benefit from the national health system (Plurinational State of Bolivia) and social security coverage, including maternity benefits (Mexico), valorize paid domestic work, raise awareness about paid domestic worker rights and ratify, adopt and implement the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) (Ecuador and Mexico). The Musaned online platform (2019) of Saudi Arabia is intended to facilitate domestic worker recruitment and awareness about the rights and duties of employers and domestic workers.

41. In 2021, Costa Rica reactivated the Commission on Domestic Work, composed of the National Institute of Women, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, International Labour Organization and three national and migrant women domestic worker organizations to consider domestic worker occupational profiles and competencies, strengthen labour inspections, coordinate with the national employment system and organize campaigns to protect labour and health rights during the pandemic.

42. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the critical inadequacy of compensation and working conditions for paid care and health workers. In France, 209,000 home help and nursing service providers were set to receive 13 to 15 per cent salary increases and 1.5 million professionals in health institutions and nursing homes an increase of €183 net per month in 2021. The care system reform in Germany in 2021 includes a €1 billion annual tax subsidy to increase pay for 1.2 million care workers and reduce the contributions of care and nursing home residents. Under the National Economic Recovery Plan of Malaysia, some 7,000 operators of registered child-care centres received one-time grants of up to 5,000 ringgit and 1,500 ringgit for home-based child-care centres to help to mitigate financial problems in the wake of the shutdowns. Tax exemptions up to 3,000 ringgit were earmarked for setting up child-care centres in private sector workplaces.

43. Measures to support gender-responsive social protection and care infrastructure and services have taken on heightened significance with the economic and social fallout caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in hard-hit sectors in which women workers predominate. In Antigua and Barbuda, a project entitled “A helping hand is everybody’s business” helped those affected by the tourism sector shutdowns caused by the pandemic. Belarus decreed measures to support adversely affected industries in which the majority of workers are women, including tourism, retail,

catering and transport. Cambodia provided cash support for workers and employees in the garment and tourism sectors, in whom the majority are women. Ecuador provided specific health-care support to older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people (LGBTQI+) and Equatorial Guinea set up a public social guarantees programme that covers the basic needs of the most vulnerable groups during the pandemic.

44. Egypt decreed a workers' emergency benefits fund, involving the National Council for Women to make sure women's needs were met. In Georgia, the Anti-Crisis Economic Plan included compensation for vulnerable groups and people who lost income, with women heavily represented in each group. The Islamic Republic of Iran allocated 10 million rials in cash subsidies to 17 million households, prioritizing women-headed households and, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the loan for women heads of households was doubled. The relief package in Mongolia includes measures postponing mortgage payments, exempting social insurance contributions and increasing child support, food vouchers and pensions and benefits for targeted groups, including women, until the end of 2021. Morocco extended unemployment benefits in the amount of 2,000 dirhams per month to men and women employees in the formal sector who lost jobs during the pandemic and 800 to 1,200 dirhams per month to women and men working in the informal sector, depending on the size of their households.

45. Specific measures have been implemented by Member States to promote women's entry, re-entry and advancement in the labour market by providing care services and paid maternity and parental leave, including to offset the disproportionate job losses experienced by women as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Social Investment Law (2021) of Colombia contains measures to mitigate crisis effects on women's poverty and inequality by promoting women's access to decent work; commitments made by 16 entities would generate 800,000 employment opportunities for women. In Kyrgyzstan, employment services have supported unemployed women in 2021 with unemployment benefits, vocational training and public works programmes. The Republic of Korea provides comprehensive employment support for women taking career breaks, including vocational training through 159 women's re-employment centres, particularly for jobs in digital technology sectors with high entry barriers.

46. In Ireland, the first National Remote Work Strategy (2021) supports those with caring responsibilities through flexible work schedules; being able to work remotely can make it easier for women with families to remain in or rejoin the workforce. Similarly, in Argentina, a law on teleworking contracts (2021) in public and private sectors supports work schedules that are compatible with care obligations and promotes the redistribution of care tasks to men. Argentina also seeks to increase the employment of women and the transgender population by reducing private sector employer contributions for those recruiting new workers for an indefinite period, beginning 1 April 2021 and continuing for 12 months thereafter. Through its National Agenda for the Equality of Women and LGBTI People (2018–2021), Ecuador calls for reducing women's workloads and expanding care services to enhance women's access to decent work opportunities and ultimately their economic autonomy.

47. In Egypt, employers having 100 or more women workers must establish a workplace nursery or contract a nursery. Support centres for working women have helped 195,000 working mothers to fulfil both family and work duties since 2020. In El Salvador, according to a special law for the regulation and installation of nurseries for workers' children (2018), employers are obliged to provide nurseries for workers' children, ranging from 4 months to 3 years of age. In Hungary, measures were introduced to reduce the gender employment gap and bring women and parents raising small children back to the labour market by increasing the number of nursery places

from 51,000 in early 2020 to 70,000 by 2022, providing parents returning to work a monthly child-care benefit until the child turns 3 years of age and developing employment opportunities tailored to the needs of mothers raising small children.

48. Countries have expanded paid maternity, paternity and parental leave, in some cases in response to the pandemic, to support women's job continuity while allowing mothers and fathers to care for newborns and children (Albania, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, Egypt, Georgia, Germany, India, Ireland, Jordan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Switzerland, Suriname, Ukraine). The Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) mandates a minimum leave period of 14 weeks for women around childbirth and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 191) of at least 18 weeks. In 2021, Denmark created a parental leave scheme for the self-employed, providing incentives especially for younger women to become entrepreneurs by facilitating their efforts to manage both a business and start a family. Georgia provides paid paternal leave of 57 days (2020) and India has extended maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks (2017).

49. Member States are providing training, counselling and mentoring to facilitate women entering, advancing in and re-entering the labour market (Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Georgia, Honduras, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Morocco, Mozambique, Rwanda, Thailand and Turkey) and specialized programmes to support livelihood and employment opportunities for survivors of violence (Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Peru). Their lower rates of labour force participation typically mean that women will have fewer years of contributions, lower average lifetime incomes and consequently lower pensions. In Argentina, a programme on recognition of contributions for care tasks (2021) redresses the gender retirement gap by recognizing and valuing women's unpaid care work to raise their children as follows: one year of pension contributions per child, two years per adopted child and an additional year per child with a disability.

50. Various means are being employed by Member States to recognize the economic contribution of women's unpaid care and domestic work, including time-use surveys (Cambodia, Georgia, Mexico and Morocco). Some 85 countries conducted time-use surveys during the period 1966–2020. Most countries conducted one or two surveys, while a few high-income countries did so on a more frequent basis. Cambodia is intending to use the results of the survey to support and advocate policies on the care economy. Mexico conducted its most recent survey in 2019. Morocco is raising awareness to change the belief that unpaid care and domestic work is primarily the responsibility of women and girls and to calculate and include its value in national gross domestic product.

D. Addressing the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers

51. The agreed conclusions address the transition of women employed in the informal economy to formal employment, as well as the need for national gender-responsive migration policies to ensure decent work for migrant women workers and to eliminate all forms of trafficking in persons. Only a few Member States reported relevant measures to support women's formal paid employment.

52. In 2021, Argentina adopted a regime of fiscal inclusion and support for small taxpayers, which reduces labour informality by promoting the incorporation of women and men entrepreneurs in vulnerable situations, own-account workers and those outside the formal labour market or working in a dependent relationship with

gross incomes lower than the minimum pension. It allows for business registration and for access to pensions and social security for families. The National Registry of Workers in the Popular Economy seeks to recognize, formalize and guarantee the rights of women and men workers in the informal economy.

53. In Colombia, the Formal Employment Support Programme, which is part of the country's COVID-19 economic reactivation, has protected 4.1 million jobs since March 2021, with support to 143,000 employers. In November 2021, employers who had documented their loss of income and up-to-date payment of wages and social security contributions became eligible to receive support equivalent to 50 per cent of the minimum wage for each female worker, specifically in the tourism, hospitality, gastronomy, artistic, entertainment and recreation sectors. In the case of employers in other economic sectors and male workers, they will receive support equivalent to 40 per cent of the minimum wage.

54. In Mexico, the "Opening Spaces" strategy is an effort by the National Employment Service to assist women and men seeking work who face significant barriers, such as people with disabilities, migrants and day labourers, and those in sectors with the greatest pandemic-related job loss. Mozambique has reinforced the implementation of the 25 per cent quota for women in public works programmes, which has contributed to increasing formal employment for women and reducing their dependence on precarious and/or unpaid jobs, especially in rural areas. In Peru, the national "Your enterprise" programme (2017) seeks to increase the productivity and sales of micro- and small enterprises by facilitating formalization, access to credit and digital technology and capacity development for women and men entrepreneurs.

E. Managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment

55. The agreed conclusions call for gender-responsive approaches to skills development and decent work to facilitate women's participation as users, workers, entrepreneurs, content creators, innovators and leaders in new and emerging fields and to leverage science and technology for women's economic empowerment. Member States have taken steps to put this into practice (Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Maldives, Peru, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Thailand and Zimbabwe).

56. A few countries have instituted events to mark the International Day of Women and Girls in Science or the International Girls in ICT Day (Austria, Azerbaijan and Denmark), which are typically public-private sector collaborations, in order for girls to gain insight and experience in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields and meet inspiring role models whose career trajectories they might follow. Other initiatives directed at girls and young women include: in Albania, the Coderstrust Academy (2021), an intensive 12-week online digital jobs training programme; in Brazil, the Girls in Exact Sciences, Engineering and Computing programme; in Colombia, a science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) initiative aimed at girls, reaching over 6,400 adolescent girls in 2021 with virtual workshops, laboratories and mentoring in those areas; in El Salvador, the STEAM laboratory, providing training in innovation and technology in education and reducing the technology gap between girls and boys; and in Zimbabwe, the encouragement of girls to pursue science, engineering, technology and mathematics fields by providing tuition payments and linkages to the labour market.

57. Turning to women's economic empowerment, the Todas Conectadas platform in Chile will provide digital skills to 3.8 million women in the Latin American and Caribbean region and create economic opportunities for 1 million women over the next three years. The national policy on gender equality in science, technology, knowledge and innovation aims to achieve gender parity in these areas by 2030. In India, a scheme to usher in digital literacy in rural areas, launched in 2017, bridges the digital divide, specifically targeting marginalized populations in rural areas, including scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, minorities, the poor, people with disabilities and women. Approximately 50 million beneficiaries are enrolled, including 25 million women, and 42 million have received training.

58. In Georgia, the Innovations and Technology Agency is running STEAM boot camps and applying strict gender parity for those camps, and organizing certification and licensing programmes for 3,000 advanced information and communications technology specialists (45 per cent of whom were women) and grants programmes providing start-up seed funding (30 per cent of the recipients were women). In Rwanda, the Coding Academy applies gender parity for student enrolment and aims to produce local expertise in software development, cybersecurity and embedded systems. The 250 Startups incubation programme in Rwanda has produced 30 technology start-ups, including ones founded and led by girls. In Thailand, the women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workforce readiness and development programme has trained 1,600 low- and semi-skilled women workers since 2018.

F. Strengthening women's collective voice, leadership and decision-making

59. The agreed conclusions call for women's full, equal and effective participation, leadership and decision-making in the public and private sectors and protecting and promoting women's rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and collective bargaining to enable women to organize and join trade unions, cooperatives and business associations. Several submissions addressed these issues (Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Suriname, Switzerland and Ukraine).

60. In Antigua and Barbuda, the Trades and Labour Union, in collaboration with the Cipriani College of Labour & Co-Operative Studies, provides scholarships to members, particularly women officers and staff, to join leadership programmes and seminars on the impact of COVID-19 in the workplace (2020–2021). In Argentina, a programme to support women's leadership and sexually diverse identities within trade unions (2021) addresses gender-based discrimination in trade union administration, management and collective bargaining. In Cambodia, the Women Workers' Rights through Stronger Trade Unions project (2021) increases women's access to labour rights and protections, working with three unions that represent large numbers of urban women workers in food and services, building and woodworking and the informal economy.

61. Member States are supporting women's participation in economic decision-making, including by mandating gender quotas for public and private sector boards and trade union leadership (Austria, Costa Rica, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Switzerland). In Austria (2018), supervisory boards of listed companies and companies with more than 1,000 employees must have a minimum of 30 per cent women. Supervisory boards of state-affiliated companies may voluntarily raise women's representation from 35 per cent to 40 per cent by 2024. In 2017, the Islamic Republic of Iran raised the quota for women in managerial positions to 30 per cent

by the end of 2022. In 2021, Switzerland raised the gender quota from 30 per cent to 40 per cent for state-affiliated companies and institutions and 30 per cent for listed companies by the end of 2023. Costa Rica reformed the law on the minimum percentage of women on boards of associations, trade unions and social organizations (2021) to establish the principle of gender parity.

G. Strengthening the role of the private sector in women's economic empowerment

62. The agreed conclusions call for actions to promote a socially responsible and accountable private sector and workplace environments and institutional practices that value all workers, offer equal opportunities for full participation, facilitate women's entrepreneurship and promote and protect women's rights to work and at work in global value chains.

63. A few Member States are encouraging private sector entities to mainstream gender equality considerations in their policies and practices by awarding gender equality seals to recognize progress (Austria, Chile and Costa Rica), providing tax benefits for companies that present training proposals on the care economy, on non-traditional occupations for women or on ending gender-based violence (Argentina), mandating employers to promote professional equality between men and women in the workplace (France), instituting regular self-assessments of action taken to advance gender equality in the workplace in terms of treatment, decision-making and work-life balance (Luxembourg), setting up an online platform to support companies to make their human rights due diligence more gender-responsive (the Netherlands) and calling for gender audits of private enterprises (Ukraine).

64. Member States are increasing investment and support for women entrepreneurs (Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Egypt, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Senegal, Slovenia, Thailand, Ukraine and Zimbabwe), in part prompted by the ruinous impact of COVID-19 on women's enterprises and entrepreneurship. Some efforts are directed to all, but apply to women, and others specifically target women, including funding for enterprise start-up and development, training and mentoring.

65. In Chile, a programme of bonuses provides support to micro- and small enterprises affected by COVID-19; contributions are 20 per cent higher for women-led businesses. In Colombia, the "Women's Initiative" fund (2020) channels public and private resources for the design and distribution of financial products and services for women entrepreneurs. In Honduras, an initiative to distribute seed capital for women entrepreneurs provides incentives for 1,500 women between the ages of 18 and 50 and for older women heads of household affected by the pandemic or by Hurricane Eta and Hurricane Iota. In Mexico, a national microenterprise financing programme channels lines of credit through microfinance institutions; 94 per cent of beneficiaries are women. A microfinancing fund for rural women supports low-income rural women who cannot access financing from traditional banks. The Republic of Korea supports women entrepreneurs to scale up through a venture investment fund that had raised \$1.14 billion by 2020, with \$16.8 million more expected in 2021. In 2019, the Sovereign Fund for Strategic Investment of Senegal launched a 1 billion Communauté financière africaine franc fund for women's economic empowerment, known as the "WE! Fund", to invest in gender-responsive small and medium enterprises.

66. Antigua and Barbuda offers online entrepreneurship training for those adversely affected by COVID-19, including persons unemployed for at least three months, persons between the ages of 18 and 35 and those over 55 years of age, women who head single-parent households, former hospitality and aviation sector workers, persons currently receiving a social benefit, and persons with disabilities; the Entrepreneurial Development Programme (2019) applies gender parity in approving loans for start-up and expansion. In Guatemala, a technical support body on gender, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities provides training on business planning, digital marketing and financial literacy to indigenous women. In Hungary, a programme known as “StartupHER” (2020) offers training and mentoring followed by incubation investment for selected business ideas. In Kyrgyzstan, a mentoring programme for women entrepreneurs is a six-month interaction with successful entrepreneurs; participants receive guidance on running businesses, strategic crisis planning and personal and professional development plans. Nigeria and Senegal participate in the “50 Million African Women Speak” project, an online one-stop-shop platform for financial and other services that women need to start and develop successful businesses.

67. In India, the “Stand-up India” scheme mandates that every government bank gives at least one loan to a woman entrepreneur. Under the scheme, loans in the range of 10 lakh rupees to 1 crore rupees are granted for entrepreneurs to set up greenfield enterprises, particularly women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes; over 81 per cent of loans approved are for women. Under the country’s 2019 Public Procurement Policy for Micro- and Small Enterprises, 25 per cent of annual procurement by government ministries and departments and public sector enterprises comes from micro- and small enterprises, including 3 per cent of procurement from women-owned enterprises.

IV. Conclusions

68. Member States have assiduously implemented the agreed conclusions of the sixty-first session of the Commission even as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupts development efforts globally, although implementation has been uneven across countries and thematic areas. Crucial gender gaps and inequalities remain and, in some cases, there have been alarming increases in those gaps and inequalities, for example in the rate of extreme poverty. The relatively low number of COVID-19 response and recovery measures that address women’s economic security and unpaid care work are of great concern given women’s disproportionate job losses and intensified unpaid care and domestic work during the pandemic. The disparities in the capacities of higher income and developed countries versus struggling low-income and developing countries to secure the fiscal space to make gender-responsive investments in women’s economic empowerment are also of critical concern.

69. Submissions from Member States demonstrate the commitment to strengthening normative, legal, policy and regulatory frameworks to advance gender equality and eliminate gender-based discrimination, violence and harassment in the world of work. However, issues of online harassment and cyberbullying that may inhibit or mar women’s entry into, or return to, an increasingly digitalized workplace received little attention. Countries showed growing adherence to the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. They are supporting women’s and girls’ participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields, as well as women’s enterprises and entrepreneurship, including to offset the damages of COVID-19. Some progress has been made in strengthening social protection and care systems and enhancing specific benefits such as paid maternity and parental leave, all of which serve to support women’s labour force participation. Countries are addressing the

needs of domestic workers to a certain extent but, overall, the situation of care and health workers remains dire as the pandemic takes its toll.

70. While most Member State submissions reflect the deleterious impacts of COVID-19 on women's economic empowerment and work prospects, with very few exceptions countries have not accounted for the daunting challenges of the climate and environment crises for the world of work nor the opportunities that are emerging for women's decent work in the green and blue economies. Few submissions address the critical need to build the resilience of women workers, producers and employers facing the combined health, economic and climate and environmental crises. Other areas that merit greater attention are reducing women's predominance in the informal economy, particularly in view of the precarious situations of women migrants, women with disabilities and other marginalized groups of women workers, and supporting women's collective voice, leadership and decision-making.

71. The intersecting crises have revealed critical weaknesses in economic, social and health systems, highlighting the continued relevance and urgent need for accelerated implementation of the agreed conclusions. Significantly increased investment and action will be required to recover lost gains, safeguard women's and girls' economic, social and environmental security and make decisive progress towards achieving women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.
