

PilibosMUN

**Programme for Gender
Equality and the
Empowerment of Women**

Background Guide



General Assembly:

Committee: Economic Empowerment of Women and Closing the Global Gender Pay Gap

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Chair's Message:

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women committee at PilibosMUN. Despite decades of international advocacy and legal reform, economic inequality between women and men remains one of the barriers to global development, social justice, and sustainable growth.

Women's economic empowerment is not only a matter of fairness, but a prerequisite for strong and improving economics, labor markets, and poverty reduction. Around the world, women continue to earn less than men for work of equal value. They face structural barriers to employment and entrepreneurship, and shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care. These inequalities are compounded by race, disability, migration status, and geography, leaving millions of women trapped in cycles of economic vulnerability.

This committee challenges the root causes of the global gender pay gap and proposes solutions that are both ambitious and implementable. Delegates must consider how legal frameworks, labor markets, financial systems, and social norms interlink to limit women's economic participation.

Successful resolutions will require balancing national contexts with international cooperation, economic efficiency with human rights, and short-term policy reforms with long-term structural change. I encourage all delegates to approach this topic with critical thinking, empathy, and

creativity. The work of this committee has the potential to shape not only economic policy, but the realities of women across the globe.

Sincerely, Sophia Bardakjian

UN Women Chairperson

Committee Background

UN Women was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010 to create progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women all around the world. As a central UN body, UN Women supports intergovernmental processes and promotes accountability through research, policy guidance, and advocacy.

Economic empowerment lies at the core of the UN Women's mandate. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the right to work, to equal pay for equal work, and to just and favorable conditions of employment. These principles were later reinforced through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), which obligates states to eliminate discrimination against women in economic and social life.

Despite these commitments, gender-based economic inequality remains well established. According to the World Economic Forum, at the current rate of progress it will take well over a century to close the global economic gender pay gap. Women remain underrepresented in formal employment and leadership roles, while being overrepresented in informal, low-paid, and precarious work. These disparities limit women's autonomy and reduce overall economic productivity.

UN Women plays a critical role in coordinating global responses to these challenges, particularly in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). This committee operates within that framework, seeking to translate international normalities into actionable economic policy.

Topic Background

The Global Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap refers to the difference in average earnings between women and men for work of equal value. On a global scale, women earn approximately 77 percent of what men earn, a figure that masks wider disparities faced by women of color, migrant women, and women with disabilities. The gap persists across regions, income levels, and types of employment.

This inequality is not solely the result of individual choice, but rather of structural and systemic factors. Occupational segregation channels women into lower-paying sectors such as care work, education, and informal services. Women are less likely to advance into senior or managerial roles, a phenomenon often described as the “glass ceiling.” In many countries, limited pay transparency and weak enforcement mechanisms allow wage discrimination to persist unchecked.

Labor Force Participation and Unpaid Care Work

Globally, women’s labor force participation remains significantly lower than men’s, with women comprising only 47% of the global workforce compared to 74% for men, according to recent studies. While approximately 75% of men participate in the labor market, only about 54% of women are engaged in the same, highlighting a significant gender gap. One of the primary drivers of this disparity is the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, which often falls disproportionately on women, limiting their availability for paid employment.

Women perform the majority of unpaid labor worldwide, including childcare, eldercare, and household responsibilities. The International Labour Organization estimates that women spend more than three times as many hours as men on unpaid care work. This burden limits women’s

ability to engage in paid employment, pursue education, or access leadership opportunities, reinforcing long-term income inequality.

Barriers to Women's Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion

Entrepreneurship is often promoted as a pathway to economic empowerment, yet women face persistent barriers to starting and scaling businesses. Women own only a minority of small and medium-sized enterprises globally and are less likely to access credit, capital, and financial services.

In many regions, discriminatory legal frameworks restrict women's property rights, inheritance, or access to banking services. Even where laws are formally equal, social norms and financial bias often result in women receiving smaller loans, higher interest rates, or being excluded entirely from financial systems. These constraints limit innovation, job creation, and economic diversification.

Intersectionality and Economic Inequality

Economic inequality does not affect all women equally. Intersectional factors such as race, ethnicity, disability, age, migration status, and rural location significantly shape women's economic experiences. Women in conflict-affected states and women in the informal economy often face compounded discrimination and heightened economic insecurity.

Effective policy responses must therefore move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions and account for the diverse realities of women across different economic and cultural contexts.

Past International Action

The international community has undertaken numerous initiatives to address women's economic inequality, including:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
- Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 8
- International Labour Organization Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100)
- UN Women's Women's Empowerment Principles

While these frameworks have contributed to legal reforms and increased awareness, implementation gaps remain significant. Weak enforcement, limited funding, and resistance to structural change continue to hinder progress.

Bloc Positions:

High-Income and Industrialized States

These states often emphasize pay transparency laws, parental leave policies, and corporate accountability measures. Many support data-driven approaches and private sector engagement but face challenges addressing occupational segregation and leadership gaps.

Developing and Least Developed States

These states prioritize job creation, access to education and skills training, and expansion of social protection systems. Many call for international financial assistance, capacity building, and technology transfer to support women's economic participation.

Rights-Focused and Gender-Equality Advocates

These states and blocs emphasize legally binding commitments, strong enforcement mechanisms, and recognition of unpaid care work. They advocate for intersectional approaches and robust protections against workplace discrimination.

Market-Oriented States

These states favor entrepreneurship, microfinance, and private-sector-led solutions. They often emphasize women's participation in markets while expressing caution toward extensive regulation.

Questions to Consider

- How can states effectively enforce equal pay for work of equal value?
- What policies best address the unequal burden of unpaid care work?
- How can financial systems be restructured to expand women's access to capital?
- What role should the private sector play in closing the gender pay gap?
- How can international cooperation support context-specific solutions?

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