

**Kateryna Levchenko, Government Commissioner
for Gender Equality Policy, Ukraine,
June 10-11, 2021,
OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum**

Excellencies, distinguished participants!

I would like to express my gratitude for inviting me to speak at such an important event, which touches upon extremely important issues as ensuring gender equality in the economic realm and economic empowerment of women.

We firmly believe that equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of life is a prerequisite for the success of the European integration of Ukraine. This conviction is embodied in specific actions. The state gender policy is comprehensive and aimed at gender integration in all sectors.

Pursuant to the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, Ukraine has strengthened the national gender machinery. Since 2017, the coordination of the gender policy in the Government has been entrusted to the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. To ensure concerted work of all executive bodies, the Government of Ukraine has established the Commission on Gender Policy Coordination under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister Olha Stefanishyna.

The Government has developed and approved 226 national gender-disaggregated indicators to shape gender-sensitive policies including the situation with gender equality in the economic sphere.

In 2020, at the initiative of the First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska, Ukraine joined the Biarritz Partnership, launched by the G7 countries. The Government has made next commitments which are included in the Plan of Action: 1. To develop an inclusive and gender-sensitive public space, friendly to families with children and low-mobility groups. 2. To ensure the pervasiveness of the principles of gender equality in education. 3. To combat domestic and gender-based violence. 4. To reduce the gender pay gap. 5. To reform legislation on social leave related to the birth and care of a child.

These commitments and actions for their implementation will help to solve existing problems such as the following:

- unequal economic opportunities for women and men are manifested in the low economic activity of women, which is 15 % less than male;
- partially employed women constitute 19.6%, while men constitute 11.3%;
- a high level of gender segregation in the labor market (horizontal and vertical). For instance, the share of legal entities headed by women constitutes 28.9% (instead of only 7% of women among the group of companies' executives, 12% - among corporate executives), women often work in the budget sphere, on lower-level positions.

- The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the employment of women, especially those in the retail, hotel and tourism industry, by reducing their representation on labor market. Remote work has sharpened the problem of combining work and home responsibilities, especially for women with children, and increased the risk of family conflict.

- The gender pay gap is around 20 %.

To address these and other problems, the President issued the Decree on the Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine up to 2030. To achieve the sustainable development goals and to ensure gender equality is crucial in overcoming poverty, good health, quality education, decent pay and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reducing inequality, peace and justice and strong institutions, which once again confirms the need to take into account the gender component in all spheres of society.

In order to pursue a unified state policy aimed at achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of society, improving mechanisms for its implementation and solving systemic problems in this area, the Government has launched the National Strategy for Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men for the period until 2030. The strategy defines the vector of activity of central and local executive bodies and local self-government bodies to achieve all 17 sustainable development goals.

Keeping the aim to reduce the gender pay gap, we have joined the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC). On December 9, 2020, Ukraine became the second country to receive full tripartite membership in it (together with Trade Unions, Confederation of Employers and NGO Kyiv Institute of Gender Researchers). It is important for us to learn from the positive experiences of the countries – EPIC members. This allows to consolidate more effectively the efforts of executive bodies, trade unions, employers, civil society organizations and academia to address the decreasing gender pay gap.

Let me present the example of good practice of such cooperation. The Confederation of Employers of Ukraine together with the Apparatus of Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy with the support of the International Labor Organization recently has developed and presented a Guide for employers in the field of gender equality and non-discrimination to provide practical advice to employers in the private, public and municipal sectors.

The main issues covered in this guide are: guidelines on promoting equal opportunities and preventing discrimination at the workplace; ensuring gender equality in recruitment; prevent sexism and sexual harassments in world of labor; providing decent working conditions; combination of professional and family responsibilities. The Guide was disseminated among state and private employers for practical using.

Ukraine also adheres to the international initiative “Action Coalitions for Gender Equality”, launched by UN Women in cooperation with governments of Mexico and France, having defined 3 directions: “Gender-Based Violence”, “Economic Justice and Rights” and “Technologies and Innovations for Gender Equality”. One of the national commitments is ratification till 2023 the ILO Convention 190 Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.

Dear Participants of the discussion!

We are committed and consistent in our support for initiatives and activities of the OSCE to ensure gender equality. We believe that a tight cooperation with international organizations is the key for our success – moreover that gender equality is a basis for a civilized and sustainable society.