



THE SPEECH DELIVERED BY

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THE PRESIDENT

OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF TUSIAD

AT THE MEETING

4. UN CONFERENCE

ON LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

“THE BUESINESS AND DEVELOPMENT CASES FOR

ENGAGING WOMEN IN GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS”

10 May 2011

İstanbul Kongre Merkezi

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Madame Undersecretary, distinguished guests,

TÜSİAD, as the representative organization of the Turkish business world working for public interest, takes as its fundamental the improvement of investment environment and social welfare, of employment, productivity, innovative capacity and education through constant enhancement. TÜSİAD is also a firm supporter of women's empowerment in all spheres of life, especially in the economy.

It is important to underline the fact that the participation of women in economic life is not a supplementary but a vital issue for economic development. If you want to have a sustainable growth rate and the welfare of the society.

As shown by several researches, improving the employment rate of women is associated with poverty reduction, higher economic growth and better governance. In addition, working women are more involved than nonworking women in making decisions in relation to their children's education and health, which positively affect the welfare of future generations.

Women who are economically more dependent also gain status within the family and society. The opening up of women's participation in the economy also facilitates the overcoming of barriers in many areas of life. However women face challenges in gaining access to the working life. Traditional roles ascribed by the society to men and women, problems in accessing education, lack of mechanisms to assist in balancing the working life and the family are the problems that especially make their life harder..

In addition to the need to improve the women's role in working life as professionals, entrepreneurship can be used as a very influential channel to realize the potential of and provide job opportunities for women, regardless of country or type of economy. Special measures should be taken to alleviate the financial problems of women entrepreneurs such as granting loans at favourable terms, providing funds for women to start up business and offering financial assistance.

We need to create opportunities that will make individuals equal value-added stakeholders. That is why I believe that we must begin with our perspective on the strengthening the role of women in the society and economy. The more the leading figures and decision makers from politics, private sector and NGO's make women's empowerment and economic and social development, the more a priority in their impact will create for awareness.

As all you know "gender mainstreaming" is a public policy concept that assesses gender equality in all policies, programmes and legislation. Now we have "The Women Empowerment Principles of UNIFEM and UN Global Compact" which provides a "gender lens" for the private sector to realize women's empowerment. These principles, ranging from the importance of leaders in promotion of increasing gender equality to gender sensitive human resources policies, from vocational training to promotion of business relationships

with women entrepreneurs, will enlighten our way in the quest for gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community.

We are encouraged that company examples supporting these principles and the solution process are increasing. Besides, it is also important to indicate approaches on how to make and measure the progress. Interactions among the stakeholders are at most importance. It is time for governments and public institutions for private sector and civil society organizations, has to reassess how they include and integrate women into the economic activity.

Distinguished guests,

Gender equality remains a major challenge in Turkey despite notable examples of high-level presence of women in Turkish society. The rates of women's labor force participation, employment and access to education are still the lowest among the EU and the OECD countries. At the other end of the spectrum, women's participation in certain professions such as lawyers, professors and doctors is relatively strong. The number of women in top management levels at multinational and national companies is also noteworthy in Turkey.

Although the increasing representation of women in business life is notable and evidence of the perception change in society, the current picture is not satisfactory and there is a long way to go. We need to have a comprehensive strategy to increase women's employment. In order to increase the number of success stories and to strengthen their position, we should continue shaping our strategies with the understanding that it is not possible to be a strong, developed country by excluding half of the population from the game. In this sense, it is crucial to encourage women to exercise their rights, mobilise political will and monitor the reflections of laws and regulations on implementations.

As TÜSİAD, we have a gender equality working group which initiates academic reports, follows up the latest developments, policies, organizes seminars and meetings to raise awareness about women issues as a pressure group.

Recently, we organized a conference on "Women in Working Life" on 14th of January this year. In this conference, a short film prepared by TÜSİAD was displayed. In the film, women express the problems in working life with their real life experiences. Alongside this, well-known men from different fields such as business, arts, sports and politics deliver related messages on the subject. The film was prepared with the understanding that women's participation in economic life is a social issue that concerns the whole society, both male and female. I would suggest you to watch the film. It has also English subtitles. You can access it through TUSIAD's website.

Last week, Turkey hosted the Global Summit of Women which brought influential woman leaders from governments, business and NGO's. Today in our event we will explore the

benefits and challenges to engaging women in global value chains. I believe that this kind of events will help improve women's economic opportunities worldwide.

Before ending my address, I would like to thank our partners for organizing this event; UN Global Compact Office, UN Women and ITC and the speakers for their valuable contribution.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Ms. Güler Sabancı for signing of the CEO Statement of Support for the Women's Empowerment Principles. I believe that her signature will encourage many more other companies to support these principles. Thank you.