

Concept Note

"Ring the Bell for Gender Equality 2018" – A collaboration between the Stock Exchange of Thailand, the Embassy of Sweden and UN Women Asia and the Pacific to advance gender equality in businesses

Bangkok, 8 March 2018

CONTEXT

International Women's Day (IWD) 2018 will focus on advancing women's voice, participation and leadership towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in rural and urban settings. The global theme for IWD, "Time is Now: rural and urban activists transforming women's lives", speaks to key negotiations taking place at the 62nd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (New York, 12th to 23rd March 2018)¹ and responds to key concerns related to shrinking spaces for women and civil society participation and leadership in democratic and economic governance. Importantly, the theme has been identified to propel key messages related to women's advancement on the work floor in line with current affairs and campaigns (#MeToo; #Timesup, etc.). IWD's theme further underscores UN Women's mandate to advance gender equality in the workplace, recognizing that structural barriers and gender-biased practices persist across various levels of income and industries in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

From 1994 to 2014, women's participation in the workforce in East Asia declined from 71 per cent to 63 per cent, and in South Asia from 36 to 31 per cent. In Southeast Asia and the Pacific, women's share in the work force remained stagnant at 59 per cent. Indeed, gender gap in labour participation persists despite economic growth, higher levels of girls' education, decreasing fertility rates, and better public awareness of gender equality, illustrating the deep-rooted causes for lack of progress on women's economic participation. In addition, women are paid less than men for work of equal value across countries and sectors in this region. The gender pay gap is 20 percent in East Asia and the Pacific and 33 per cent in South Asia. Empowering women and girls is key not only to the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also to overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide.

It is in this context that the "Ring the Bell for Gender Equality 2018" initiative has been conceptualized, with a key focus engaging businesses in building awareness, sharing good practices and enhancing commitments in the corporate sector towards creating enabling environments for the advancement of gender equality in the workplace, including through

¹ Theme of CSW 62 "Challenges and opportunities in achieving in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women"

the implementation of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPS)². The WEPS include key actions to advance women's leadership and participation on the work floor as well as to address gender biases and sexual harassment in the corporate sector. Ring the Bell is part of UN Women and partners³ ' global initiative to advance gender equality among businesses which see 55 stock exchanges across the world participating in bell ringing ceremonies in this year.

THE "RING THE BELL FOR GENDER EQUALITY" INITIATIVE

For the commemoration of International Women's Day on 8 March, UN Women is in collaboration with the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) and the Embassy of Sweden to organize a "Ring the Bell for Gender Equality 2018" event in Bangkok. The objective is to engage Thai business leaders in building awareness, sharing good practices and enhancing the corporate sector's commitment to advancing gender equality in the workplace through the WEPS.

The SET's support would open up new avenues to advance gender equality in workplace by engaging listed companies and global corporations through the SET's cooperation with the World Federation of Exchanges. Top Thai and multinational corporates across various industries Grab (Thailand) Ltd. and IKEA Southeast Asia have agreed to participate in this event.

Key Objectives:

- To raise awareness in the private sector of WEPS, gender equality gaps, and its roles in promoting gender equality, including women's leadership and advancing safe work spaces for women
- To strengthen private sector's commitment to advancing gender equality in the workplace and encourage them to engage in gender sensitive policies beyond the IWD 2018 commemoration

Content:

The event will feature a roundtable discussion on the various measures that leading Thai and Swedish corporations have adopted to advance gender equality, create safe working environments for women, and empower female leadership in the workplace.

The proposed discussants include Miwa Kato, the UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, the SET President, the Swedish Ambassador to Thailand, IKEA Southeast Asia's Sustainability and Communication Director, and Executive Director of Grab (Thailand). The

² UN Women and UN Global Compact have initiated Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPS) to provide a set of considerations through which businesses can survey and analyze current practices, benchmarks and reporting practices. To date, Central Group (formerly Central Retail Corporation) and Thai Airways International are signatories to WEPS in Thailand.

³ The UN Global Compact, UN Women, Sustainable Stock Exchanges Initiative, International Finance Corporation: IFC, World Federation of Exchanges and Women in ETFs

event is expected to draw 80-100 participants from the private sector, the diplomatic community, and the media.

PROGRAM

"Ring the Bell for Gender Equality 2018"

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Venue: Sukree Kaewcharoen Auditorium,
3rd floor, SET building, Ratchadaphisek Road

Date and time: 8 March, 13.30-16.30 hrs.

PROGRAM:

13.30 – 14.00	Registration of participants and journalists
14.00 – 14.15	Welcome and introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kesara Manchusree, the SET President ● Dr. Miwa Kato, UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific ● H.E. Staffan Herrström, the Swedish Ambassador to Thailand
14.20 – 14.29	Prepare for "Ring the Bell for Gender Equality 2018"
14.29 – 14.39	Bell-ringing ceremony and group photo
14.40 – 16.00	Roundtable discussion "Future of Work" (to be moderated by Anna-Karin, UN Women Asia and the Pacific's Deputy Regional Director) Proposed discussants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>"Women Empowerment Principles: What are they, Why are they Important and How can we Achieve them?"</u>, Fiza Farharn, a member of UN Secretary General's ● High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment/Global Advisor on Economic Empowerment ● <u>"Parental Leave at IKEA: Why It Makes Economic Sense"</u> Lars Svensson, IKEA Southeast Asia's Sustainability and Communication Director- ● <u>"Promoting Gender Equality in the Workplace: Experiences from Japan"</u> Mariko Kawaguchi, Senior Researcher, Daiwa Institute of Research, Board Member of Global Compact Network (Japan) and Councilor Plan International (Japan) ● <u>"Women's Economic Empowerment from a Man's Perspective"</u> Pita Limjaroenrat, Executive Director of Grab (Thailand) Ltd.
16.00-16.30	Q& A session/ End of the program