

# 14<sup>TH</sup> WOMEN LEADERS NETWORK MEETING

Plenary Session: “**Women in Business**”

**HE Laura Albornoz**

Minister of Women’s Affairs - Chile

President of the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States

Δ **This 14<sup>th</sup> APEC WLN meeting** is one of the most important global platforms for women’s networking and their economical and trading activities.

**Daniza Gutiérrez** is coming together with other Chilean women. She is a winner of the 2007 version of the Chilean Seed Capital competitive Fund. She contacted the Chilean Federation of Women Entrepreneurs as she attended the 19<sup>th</sup> Global Summit of Women successfully held in Santiago de Chile in May, 2009. She then applied with an interesting project. That’s why she is here with us in Singapore... because of networking.

**In line with the 2001 World Bank Report, gender inequalities in** developing countries restrain economic growth. It also states that about 70% of the 1.3 billion people living on less than one dollar a day are women.

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Certainly, there is a direct relationship between accessing to microcredit and economical development, as well as women empowerment and leadership. In addition, there is a direct link between micro financial availability and women’s financial sustainability.

**We all know that women are the poorest** of all poor people in the world. Women-headed households are poorer than men-headed ones. However, women aren’t poor because of being women. Women are poor because they don’t have the same opportunities than men.

Women-headed households are poor because of the gender-based salary gap and because they have less opportunities regarding training, salary raises and promotion.

More men may result unemployed than women, but men use to have higher salaries and better benefits. Women are still perceived to be in the lower rank of poverty levels. Microfinance is closely associated to female gender

stereotypical social and economical environment. Same way, decreasing poverty has become a specific expected result from female micro enterprising. In spite of that approach, women are able to develop big enterprises, too.

Some of us are poor, some of us have low or middle incomes, and a few women have more money. Therefore, “women” is not a synonym for “poor people” neither for “short-term projects” not for “lower capital absorptive capacity”.

Thus, in order to help women, we not only have to continue tailoring support programs thinking of women as poor people, but instead, we have to do at the same time our best efforts to eliminate gender inequalities in order that women are not poor any more.

**Some two weeks ago, Chilean President Michelle Bachelet** gave awards to 30 entrepreneurs from all through the country, in representation of the more than 3.600 winners of the 2009 Seed Capital Fund. The President underscored that this year support to the microenterprises, is a key feature of the economical program to cope the economic crisis, since it also means to ensure eight thousand jobs and the families involved. More than half of the winners were women. A fresh injection of money, led to double the 2009 competitive Seed Capital Fund, reaching **US\$ 20.370.370,4**; this being a record budget to this benefit, which also includes a program of technical assistance support.

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Dear friends, for many years we have been discussing about the best public policies to balance -both women and men- **work responsibilities and their personal lives**. I have to say that women have always made extremely imaginative arrangements to meet family care-giving and cope with work responsibilities, at the same time.

The point is that the heavier burden is normally hers because women have not replaced the unpaid household tasks by a remunerated job. They have only **added a second job**, while men continue having one and only job. The asymmetric sharing of domestic responsibilities and child care, affecting women, are on the basis of inequalities between women and men, causing almost every woman’s disadvantage at work or any other profitable activity.

So, I agree with the International Labor Organization slogan: “**The way to care is to share**”.

Governments have to ensure that women and men have the same right to freely and responsibly **decide the number and spacing of their children**. Otherwise, women are compelled to accept poorly-paid, insecure, part time or informal –in a word— non decent work, in order to merge work and family responsibilities.

We have to assure that **flexibility** doesn't mean reduced work hours; most women merely need flexibility in when, where, and how they do their work. Women don't need reduced salaries.

To attain all these objectives, women have to **reach more leader and decision-making positions**, senior or middle-level, just like men. I mean we need female managers, women appointed to the boards of directors and CEOs, as well as deputies, senators and women heads at the universities.

We need women at the Judiciary and women managing media boards, as well as female editors in chief and union leaders. We need women in every position because we need the women's points of view to be incorporated in every decision concerning the new society we need, to enhance the conditions for a fully inclusive and non discriminatory society

Chilean President Michelle Bachelet deeply knows women situation at work and gender-based discrimination. She knows about both material and cultural violence against women, mostly, because she is a woman.

She thinks that inequality must be tackled starting from cradle.

According to this, she has created more than three thousand and four hundred **new nursery public services**, to provide quality care for infants, and allow women workers, especially those living in poverty and heads of household, to cope with work market requirements.

Besides, the President signed a **Code of Best practices at workplace** which includes equal opportunities for women and men, expecting women-headed enterprises to be the most accurate ones concerning these matters.

We not only have to encourage entrepreneurship among women. We have also to secure the incorporation of gender perspective in general management, training programs, and Human Resources policies. Women

not only have to learn about the full range of available financial instruments, we have also to include women's point of view in the **Corporate Social Responsibility** programs, considering they suggest to support sustainable human development.

Furthermore, **sustainable development** can only be achieved with the full participation of women, that's to say without ignoring the bigger part of the people in the world.

All related programs and **environmental agenda**, depend on the involvement of women in economic and political decision-making.

**As a final point**, I'd like to paraphrase president Obama: "Our countries can only prosper when all women prosper— women teenagers and girls, adult women and old women."

Thank you very much for your attention.