



ASEAN 2017 WOMEN'S BUSINESS CONFERENCE

Manila Statement on Mainstreaming Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) in ASEAN

31 August 2017 | Manila, Philippines

We, the government and private sector delegates led by the ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs' Network (AWEN) represented by the ten (10) ASEAN Member States: Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, together with Australia, the United States of America, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP);

HAVING gathered in Manila, the Philippines on 28 to 31 August 2017 for the first ASEAN Women's Business Conference with the theme: "ASEAN Women: Leading Change" through the support of the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (ACCMSME), the ASEAN Senior Economic Officials (SEOM), the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM), and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC);

ACKNOWLEDGING with appreciation the activities organized in collaboration with our Partners in support of the ASEAN Women's Business Conference:

- 1) WE ENDORSE the Co-Chair's Statement from the ASEAN forum on **Women's Economic Empowerment: the Next Driver of ASEAN's Success** co-hosted by the Governments of the Philippines and Australia which outlined the importance of women's economic empowerment as a major driver of ASEAN's future success and as a key strategy for achieving inclusive economic growth, stability, and prosperity in the region;
- 2) WE REAFFIRM our commitment to eradicate widespread and entrenched disparities in women's access to economic opportunities and resources to ensure the inclusive development for all as discussed during the United States-ASEAN Connectivity through Trade and Investment (US-ACTI) Forum on **Mainstreaming ASEAN Women in Trade of Goods and Services toward the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2025**;
- 3) WE RECOMMEND the proactive engagement of ASEAN Women (AWEN) in providing inputs to the design, development and implementation of regional strategies and policies in progressively fostering gender mainstreaming and women business empowerment across the ASEAN Community as well as creating connectivity among women associations in ASEAN to enhance communication



and cooperation that would strengthen the women's economic empowerment especially in rural areas; and

- 4) WE WELCOME the **Women ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI)**, a capacity building programme on information and communication technology (ICT)-enabled women entrepreneurship of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for ICT for Development (APCICT) of the UNESCAP, and call upon all relevant stakeholders to support its implementation in the ASEAN Member States.

DESIRING to be leaders of change for ASEAN Women through its full support to the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 through the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment as stated in the Joint Statement of the Second ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women (AMMW) issued in October 2015 in Manila, the Philippines and the ACW Work Plan 2016-2020, and the implementation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint 2025 to achieve a stronger, more inclusive, and integrated Community;

RECOGNIZING that gender equality and women's economic empowerment are cross-cutting concerns and that advancing women's economic empowerment supports a gender responsive AEC;

NOTING that women constitute more than half of the population of the ASEAN region and majority of whom are active participants in the region's economic activities, thereby boosting trade and economic growth;

CONSIDERING that the ACCMSME serves as the platform to advance women's economic empowerment in trade, leadership, and entrepreneurship, among others in the AEC pillar, as aligned with the Strategic Action Plan for SME Development (SAPSMED) 2016-2025 particularly under E-2 (Human capital development for MSMEs will be enhanced especially for women and youth) of the Strategic Goal E: Promote Entrepreneurship and Human Capital Development; and

WELCOMING the resolution of ASEAN-BAC to designate AWEN as the Co-Chair for the ASEAN-BAC Businesswomen Working Group (ABBWG) to ensure effective collaboration and complement initiatives in providing voice to women in corporates and business under the AEC, and as an Associate Member of the Joint Business Councils;

DO HEREBY recommend the endorsement of the attached Action Agenda on Mainstreaming WEE in ASEAN (enclosed in Annex A) which was presented at the ASEAN Women's Business Conference and submitted to the ASEAN Senior Economic Officials and Economic Ministers for adoption by the ASEAN Leaders and endorsement for implementation by the relevant sectoral bodies in ASEAN.

DONE in Manila, Philippines, this 31st day of August 2017, in one single copy in the English language.

ANNEX A. ACTION AGENDA ON MAINSTREAMING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WEE) IN ASEAN

The Action Agenda aims to mainstream Women's Economic Empowerment through innovation, trade and inclusive business, and human capital development by encouraging each ASEAN Member State to support the following actions:

- 1) **ADOPT CONCRETE AND MEASURABLE ACTIONS** to address the barriers that impede maximizing women's full economic potential in the areas of: finance, information access, and markets; human capital development and leadership; and innovation and technology;
- 2) **PROMOTE** women's participation and skills development in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (S.T.E.A.M.), including information and communication technologies (ICT) by providing, for example, incentives for women innovators, allocating more foreign investments in science research institutes and foundations, and by creating an enabling environment for ICT-empowerment of women entrepreneurs and to promote ICT as enabling tools for the advancement of women and their economic empowerment;
- 3) **INVEST** in programs which provide enabling environments for women micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to prosper through ease of doing business initiatives, incentives and favourable tax regulations, helping them participate in inclusive and innovative businesses whether as consumer, seller, supplier, distributor, and worker, and by addressing the constraints that limit their integration in the international markets and global value chains (GVCs);
- 4) **INCREASE** women's representation and leadership in the workforce at the executive and managerial positions by intensifying human capital development and capacity building programs that empower women to bear equal roles in all sectors as men do and, enhance gender equality policies and strategies to close the gender pay gap;
- 5) **ENCOURAGE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATION** through the ASEAN BAC and AWEN for advocacy, networking, and outreach purposes to create more opportunities for women in business; AWEN shall echo the voices of women MSMEs as its representative in the ACW under ASCC and in the ACCMSME under AEC; and
- 6) **CONSIDER** organizing an annual ASEAN Women's Business Conference led by AWEN in coordination with other relevant sectoral bodies under the ASCC and the AEC where ASEAN Member States' public and private sector representatives, academe, and civil society converge to share good practices, discuss gaps and challenges, and put forward recommendations to achieve women's economic empowerment and gender equality in the region.