



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
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EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Second China-EU Symposium on Gender Equality under HPPD

Boosting Employment and Entrepreneurship of Young Women

Shanghai, 14 November 2017

Ms Annelies Pierrot Bults, Executive Member of the European Women's Lobby

Madam President of the All China Women's Federation, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here representing the European Women's Lobby. Thank you for the invitation and thank you for organising this important event. It is a pleasure to strengthen the ties built two years ago in 2015 in Brussels between The All China Women's Federation and the European Women's Lobby on women's rights and gender equality.

I am here representing the European Women's Lobby (EWL). The EWL is the largest women's organisation in the European Union, and has built a strong women's network of members in the 28 EU Member States, three accession countries and 20 European wide organisations. We believe that equality between women and men is essential in creating a better society. It is a benefit - not a threat - for all.

We want a holistic, transformational socio-economic vision, based on well-being, equality, social justice, and a powerful voice against women's poverty. We envision a world in which women enjoy equal rights and participation in reimagined power and decision-making structures, in which all forms of violence against women has been eliminated, and women have been liberated from all forms of oppression. We envision a society in which women's contribution to all aspects of life is recognised, rewarded and celebrated - in leadership, in care and in production; all women have freedom of choice, self-confidence, and freedom from exploitation; and no woman has been left behind.

We are therefore very happy to see the Women20 (W20) gain support within the G20, not least thanks to All China Women's Federation's continuing effort in hosting and supporting W20 conferences.



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The 1st W20 in Istanbul Turkey, in 2015 called on the G20 leaders to empower women. They succeeded in W20 being officially recognized as an outreach group of the G20.

The 2nd W20, held in Xi'an China in 2016 and the 3rd in Berlin, Germany in 2017, co-organised by our German member, the Deutscher Frauenrat.

The G20 leaders' communiqué in 2016 does not mention gender equality but refers to women six times. The 2017 communiqué mentions gender equality in its preamble and has a whole section on women's empowerment including three concrete initiatives pushing forward G20's efforts to boost female entrepreneurship. So we can say and see that in one year there is progress in bringing gender equality to the G20 leaders and this is an important step forward.

So together how can we empower women and ensure that gender equality becomes a reality for us all? We need to build on the outcomes of the W20 because they give the impetus to move things forward and to bring them into the heart of policy making at the highest level. Everything is possible when there is a will and a recognition that gender equality is in the interest of society as a whole. The recommendations of the previous three W20 dialogues make us believe that this journey is possible.

W20 in **Turkey** stated “[through] *strengthening linkages between education, employment and entrepreneurship, supporting work and life balance, increasing the number of women in leadership positions, ensuring women's access to finance, eliminating workplace discrimination, supporting women's networks and women owned enterprises, delivering adequate social protection and contributing to sustainability*”.

In **Xi'an** the conclusions stated that “*inclusiveness, gender equality, and women's rights are all essential for strong, sustainable and balanced growth*”.

In **Berlin** the G20 states were called to “*systematically integrate gender analysis and gender budgeting into all its agenda, growth strategy and policy frameworks*”.

As we can see, the language has certainly progressed over a short period of time. It is now important to translate these words into concrete action plans.



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We must reach the '25by25' target set by the G20 in 2014 for reducing the gender labour participation gap by 25 percent by 2025. We need to foster women's entrepreneurship and ensure women's equal access to financial resources, markets and global value chains. We need mentoring to support young women and foster digital literacy to counteract the digital gender divide. Most importantly, these action plans have to be implemented **in a transparent, inclusive and accountable** way.

We believe that working together to foster gender equality needs international cooperation, because nowhere in the world has gender equality been achieved. We need to work together in partnership around the world. And we have different spaces to do that. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is a global agenda and for the first time, a stand-alone objective on gender equality is part of that agenda. The annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) provides another space where women across the globe continue to monitor and go beyond the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted almost a quarter of a century, here in China.

In Europe, these agendas are also crucial to advancing women's rights and gender equality. Since 2013, we have an excellent tool called the **Gender Equality Index** produced every two years by the European Institute for Gender Equality. This very good and helpful tool measures how we are progressing in a number of areas: work, health, knowledge, money, power, by providing comparative data across the EU and also in identifying the gaps and areas where persistent inequalities need to be addressed. The 2017 Index presented in October this year, shows that while some progress is being made, it is still a snail's pace as the overall gender equality index in the EU is 66% on a scale of 100. It is interesting that the area where most progress is made is in women's leadership in business, which had a very low starting point to begin with, but shows that legislative measures, such as quotas, play a key role in shaking the patriarchal system.

Legislation is the first important step but implementation is crucial. Laws must be abided and upheld. But to reach good implementation the law has to be made known and for that there is a need for awareness raising and educational programmes.

Empowering women to reach decision making positions is a way forward. For example, research has shown that a balanced Board of directors leads to greater success of businesses. Several countries are now putting legislation in place to have quota to balance the male-female participation in society.



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Gender segregation in the labour market leads to pay gaps and even more so to pension gaps. Jobs in areas where there is a strong representation of women such as in care, health and education tend to be paid less than jobs in industry and the financial sector where there are more men working. Also equal pay for equal work is not achieved everywhere. This leads to female poverty especially in old age. We want a systematic introduction of gender budgeting as recommended in the W20 meeting in Berlin in 2017, as a tool to support inclusive growth to ensure that public spending is used to advance gender equality.

In this perspective it is very important to look at life-work balance. To enable equal share of work and care makes a healthy society with less domestic violence and a happier, healthier work face is more productive. We must combat stereotypes, women can do what men can do and vice versa.

Women need a safe work place. Sexual harassment is not just taking place in Hollywood. It is happening everywhere and must not be tolerated. It is part of the continuum of violence against women, which is a worldwide phenomenon and has a high cost for society. These costs are direct, for example in economic and medical costs and, indirect causing trauma including in the next generation, and impunity. Awareness raising, codes of conduct, monitoring of follow-up to claims, protocols for identifying and documenting violence against women by the police force, hospitals, social and health workers are essentials. Safe houses, free telephone lines, services for women and children must be adequately resourced and funded. Women must be taken seriously: violence against women is a crime.

As we move into a digital society, access to the internet is crucial for active participation in society today. We welcome the G20 initiative to promote participation of women in the digital society to include the initiative #eSkills4Girls in the list of actions mandated under the G20 Action Plan. The digital gender gap has to be eliminated.

But we must not forget that the digital world is also a space of dangers particularly cyber violence where especially young women are harassed. Awareness raising programmes have to be set in place to counteract this and force providers to take action.

Young women are our future and they are reclaiming their rights. They no longer believe that everything that former generations struggled to achieve has been acquired. They see that there is still a lot to be done. I am very proud to say that the EWL has organised for three consecutive



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years, what we call an Agora, a summer school for young women, from the ages of 18-30 years old. We are inspired by the emergence of a young feminist movement in Europe and believe that they will be our torch bearers for the next generation to uphold women's rights and gender equality. I can only reiterate what French feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir said, back in 1949: *nothing is acquired for ever, we need to remain vigilant all our lives*. I believe young women are doing that today.

But gender equality is not just a women's issue, men too have to be engaged to reach the goals which we are convinced that the whole of society will benefit.

Gender equality is essential to the functioning of our societies at every level including the economy, for the well-being of all. At the moment the EU is discussing its future and women must be part of shaping the world that we want.

We have a common agenda. So let us continue the work; let's do it now and most importantly let's do it together.

We look forward to our continued cooperation.

Thank you.