News Release

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China Seeks Culture Shift to Close Gender Gap in the Workplace

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Fon Mathuros, Director, Media, Communications Department, Tel.: +86 15122018229; fmathuro@weforum.org

Chinese Version I 中文

- Educational gender gap in China nearly closed.
- Cultural expectations preventing Chinese women from succeeding in the workplace.
- Empowerment of women in China top down, rather than bottom up.
- For more information about the Annual Meeting of the New Champions 2012, please visit: http://www.weforum.org/newchampions

Tianjin, People ' s Republic of China, 13 September 2012: Women in China largely have the same educational opportunities as men, but large gaps in upbringing, income and expectations remain, according to a panel on women leaders in China on the final day of the World Economic Forum ' s Annual Meeting of New Champions 2012. Literacy rates for boys and girls in China are almost identical and 91% of girls receive basic education, according to a survey published in 2011. Furthermore, 98% of the gap in education has been closed and slightly more women than men are enrolled in universities in the country.

" The truth is that, even with equal educational opportunities, not all women have equal upbringing opportunities, " said Han Jian, Associate Professor of Management, China Europe International Business School (CEIBS). Deborah Dunsire, Chief Executive Officer and President, Millennium: The Takeda Oncology Company, USA, agreed: " We have a very well-educated set of women in China who can contribute to the economic dynamism of the country, yet there does still seem to be a gender gap. It ' s not a disparity in education anymore and hasn ' t been for decades, and it ' s not a disparity in the legal framework of work, " she said.

Panellists agreed that cultural expectations sometimes prevent women from achieving success in the workplace. He Zhenhong, President of China Entrepreneur Magazine, said offspring who return to the countryside during holidays face different questions from family based on gender. " A lot of times when these women come back for Spring Festival, people will ask about what kind of man she ' s married to. When a boy comes back, they ask about what kind of job that boy has and what kind of career he has. So it seems we have different criteria to assess a man and a woman, " she said. Hu Shuli, Editor-in-Chief of Caixin Media, People's Republic of China, noted that five Chinese women made a Forbes list of female billionaires, which is " not bad " , although she notes that only 27% of National People ' s Congress delegates in China are female, which illustrates challenges for women at the political level.

Those women who successfully enter the workplace still face challenges achieving promotion opportunities and wage parity with their male counterparts, the panellists noted. He Zhenhong said that women can use their own power and ambition to influence the business environment to survive and thrive. " In truth, the business world asks them – demands them – to be male, to be masculine, to be stars of the show, " she said. " But the goal for women in the business world is to find a real balance, to use the rules of the feminine and the masculine in a more harmonious way. "

Wang Jingbo, Chief Executive Officer, Noah Holdings, People's Republic of China, said she finds the gender gap is almost closed in China. " I rarely feel there is a big gap between men and women from my school experience to my

career experience to life, " she said. " I always feel I live in a society of gender equality. There might be differences between men and women, but these might be positive differences. "

Yang Lan, Chairperson, Sun Media Group, People's Republic of China, said that empowerment of women in China has come from the top down rather than from the bottom up, as has occurred in some Western countries. " If you look at China … for my mother ' s generation, the policy was that women could hold up half the sky but it was a top-down policy. It wasn ' t fought for by women themselves. In the business world we ' re now in, we can see that women are starting to reflect on their own choices. " She noted that women no longer need to be stuck in a bad job or marry a rich man; they are free to make their own choices.

Dunsire also noted that China has made tremendous progress over the years. She said that women in China earn 69% of what a man makes, while women in the United States make 77% of what their male counterparts earn. " It ' s been striking to see how similar the challenges that we face are, " she said.

The World Economic Forum ' s Gender Parity Group is a community of influential leaders, working to achieve growth in economic competitiveness through addressing gender gaps and achieving equality of opportunity for women. Among its activities and initiatives, the group publishes the Forum ' s influential Global Gender Gap Report, which annually tracks countries ' progress in tackling gender-based disparities. The report is used by policy-makers, politicians, academics and business and civil society leaders worldwide. This year ' s edition of the Global Gender Gap Report will be launched on 24 October 2012.

Notes to Editors

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World Economic Forum, 91-93 route de la Capite, CH-1223 Cologny/Geneva
Tel. +41 (0)22 869 1212, Fax +41 (0)22 786 2744, http://www.weforum.org