

Closing the Gender Gap Requires Better Policies and Proactive Businesses

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- Quotas and targets to include women can lead to new breakthroughs in gender equality
- Promoting women ' s leadership boosts businesses ' profits
- Women are essential participants in brokering peace settlements in conflict zones
- The theme of the 44th World Economic Forum [Annual Meeting](#) is The Reshaping of the World: Consequences for Society, Politics and Business
- For more information, visit <http://wef.ch/Davos>

Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, 25 January 2014 – Women, 51% of the world ' s population, are growing impatient with the ongoing debate about closing the gender gap. Speaking at a session on Gender-driven Growth at the 44th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, panellists said action is needed, and that examples from progressive businesses and countries have demonstrated women ' s potential impact.

Promoting more women to leadership roles and creating environments more conducive to women ' s input makes good sense from the perspective of business, politics and ethics.

In post-conflict situations, for example, “ The involvement of women is fundamental to sustainable peace, ” Phumzile

Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, said. Women are more likely to play a role in government after

a conflict and to promote policies that reduce gender discrimination in cases where they have been involved in

such negotiations.

Promotion of women can also boost businesses ' bottom lines. In the car market, women influence 85% of car

purchases worldwide. The involvement of women at all levels of the automobile industry – as managers, designers and engineers, for example – can help businesses create products and services that appeal to both men and women customers.

Carlos Ghosn, Chief Executive Officer of Renault-Nissan Alliance, said it was not enough to wait for divisions of his company to change voluntarily. Nissan Motors Japan introduced quotas, which increased women ' s leadership to roughly three times the national corporate average. “ A quota leads to action. Action leads to training, ” he said.

Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, agreed that explicit goals for promoting women can benefit men and women, even though she had initially resisted such policies. She admitted that at the start of her career she was strongly against it. “ I soon realized that unless we had targets, if not quotas, there was no way we were going to jump the right step. ” Lagarde advised both business leaders and policy-makers to “ Measure and measure very carefully ” .

Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg described additional cultural and structural barriers that have held women back. “ Leadership is associated with masculine expectations, ” she said. “ When women do the things that make them leaders, we don ’ t like them. ” Reversing these attitudes is important not only in business but also for the safety and protection of women in the developing world.

“ Gender bias against women in leadership is an absolutely crucial part of the problem ” , Sandberg added.

The Annual Meeting 2014 is taking place from 22 to 25 January under the theme, The Reshaping of the World: Consequences for Society, Politics and Business. Participating this year are over 2,500 leaders from nearly 100 countries, including 300 public figures, 1,500 business leaders and representatives from civil society, academia, the media and arts.

The Co-Chairs of the Annual Meeting 2014 are Aliko Dangote, President and Chief Executive Officer, Dangote Group, Nigeria; Kris Gopalakrishnan, President, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII); Vice-Chairman,

Infosys, India; Jiang Jianqing, Chairman of the Board, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, People ' s

Republic of China; Joseph Jimenez, Chief Executive Officer, Novartis, Switzerland; Christophe de Margerie

, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Total, France; Marissa Mayer, Chief Executive Officer, Yahoo, USA

and Judith Rodin, President, Rockefeller Foundation, USA.

Notes to Editors

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