News Release

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Close India ' s Gender Gap to open its competitive potential

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The World Economic Forum ' s India Gender Gap Review released today at the India Economic Summit examines inequalities between women and men. Leaders at the meeting are discussing the factors responsible for the size of India ' s gender gap, which, according the Forum ' s Global Gender Gap Report 2009, sees it ranked 114th out of 134 countries measured.

" Girls and women make up one half of the world ' s population and without their engagement, empowerment and contribution, we cannot hope to achieve a rapid economic recovery nor effectively tackle global challenges such as climate change, food security and conflict, " said Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman, World Economic Forum. " The Forum works year-round with leaders on ways to close gender gaps through its Women Leaders and Gender Parity Programme. "

The India Gender Gap Review presents the results of a comprehensive survey assessing the current state of gender-related corporate policies and practices in India.

Only 14% of the companies questioned have 40% or more women among their employees. These women employees are mainly present at the entry and middle levels of management, while very few women attain senior management level. Most companies do not track salary gaps, despite the clear wage gaps between women and men – only 4% of the companies surveyed are attempting to monitor salary gaps.

" Women, as half of the human capital of India, will need to be more efficiently integrated into the economy in order to boost India ' s long-term competitive potential. The World Economic Forum ' s survey of some of the biggest companies in India shows that, to achieve this integration, Indian companies will need to set targets, improve policies to close salary gaps and promote work-life balance, " said Saadia Zahidi, Co-author of the Forum ' s Global Gender Gap Report 2009 and Head of the Forum ' s Women Leaders and Gender Parity Programme.

India has closed 93% of its health gender gap, 84% of its education gap, 41% of its economic participation gap and 27% of the political empowerment gender gap according to The Global Gender Gap Report 2009.

India holds last place among the BRIC countries on the Index, behind Russia (51), China (60) and Brazil (82).

In South Asia, the sub-continent is in second-to-last place behind Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and ahead of Pakistan. Sri Lanka leads in the rankings by far, holding 16th position, followed by Bangladesh (94), Maldives (100), Nepal (110), India (114) and Pakistan (132).

*Please note that scores are produced on a zero-to-one scale and can be roughly interpreted as the percentage of the gender gap that has been closed.

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