

Translation of speeches from Spanish to English

Mexico speech: SDG-5 and how ESC can contribute to gender equality

The SDG-5 and How Economic and Social Councils Can Contribute to Gender Equality

I am Leonor Gómez Otegui, Technical Secretary of the Economic, Social, and Environmental Council of Mexico City. It is a true honor for me to be able to join you this morning to discuss Sustainable Development Goal 5, which focuses on gender equality, and how Economic and Social Councils can contribute to achieving this important goal.

As you may know, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a call to all nations to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

The 17 SDGs are interconnected, meaning that actions taken to achieve one of them will impact the achievement of all others. Another important aspect to highlight is that countries have committed to prioritizing the progress of the most disadvantaged and needy. Therefore, the SDGs are designed to eliminate poverty, hunger, AIDS, and discrimination against women and girls. Additionally, these goals are traditionally associated with sustainability in three dimensions: social, economic, and environmental. This is why there are various areas of opportunity within Economic and Social Councils to work on any of the SDGs.

To achieve SDG 5 and attain gender equality, the UN General Assembly set nine targets, which are:

End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls worldwide.

Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Eradicate harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage, as well as female genital mutilation.

Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies, promoting shared responsibility within households.

Ensure full and effective participation of women and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.

Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in international agreements.

Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

Enhance the use of enabling technology, particularly information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels. Some supporting data for these targets include the global gender pay gap, where women earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. In Mexico, the World Economic Forum estimates an even larger gap, reaching 48%. The same forum predicts that it could take the world 131 years to close the gender gap. On a global scale, 750 million women were married before the age of 18. Furthermore, as of November 2018, only 24% of national parliamentarians were women.

Regarding violence, while 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, particularly in Mexico, after the COVID-19 pandemic, 7 out of 10 women over the age of 15 have faced at least one instance of violence in their lives. Psychological and sexual violence are the most prevalent among the population.

Before delving into how Economic and Social Councils can contribute to gender equality, let's emphasize Sustainable Development Goal 17, which focuses on partnerships for the goals. One of its specific targets is:

- Foster and promote effective public, public-private, and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

For the particular case of the Economic, Social, and Environmental Council of Mexico City (CESA), it is established in the City's Constitution as a body for social dialogue and public agreement, collaborating with the local government, municipalities, and the local Congress to promote inclusive social development, rights fulfillment, sustainable economic growth, fiscal viability, income distribution, and employment. To achieve these goals through consensus, the CESA includes representatives from civil society organizations, businesses, workers, professionals, and academic institutions. This highlights the multisectoral nature of this body from both the public and private sectors.

Therefore, Economic and Social Councils, as pluralistic bodies, provide a natural space for building agreements, public policies, and legislative initiatives that empower girls and women at all levels.

As a practical example, let's consider Target 4 of SDG 5: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work. In Mexico, the discussion around a Care System, which encompasses this target, began with a study published by the CESA in 2016 called "The Neglect of Care," offering not only a diagnosis but also a roadmap for implementing public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies that recognize and value women's unpaid care and domestic work.

Although the construction of such a Care System has not yet been realized at both the local and national levels in Mexico, the contributions of the CESA of Mexico City will play a fundamental role in achieving this.

However, despite the logical reasons from social and economic perspectives to strive for gender equality, we are still far from reaching the goal. Why is this the case?

I believe this is due to an undeniable reality: achieving gender equality and eradicating any form of violence against girls and women requires a complete redesign of how we conceptualize life, both in public and private spheres. This is why it's essential to remember SDG 17 and its target to foster effective partnerships across public, public-private, and civil society spheres, drawing on successful experiences and strategies from around the world to make our efforts more efficient. In the case of Mexico, apart from proposals for constructing a Care System, there are several successful experiences that have arisen not solely from the CESA but from consensus-building between society and governments. These experiences can be studied by Economic and Social Councils from different countries and regions present here to replicate best practices at the appropriate local levels. For instance, there are national and local Laws on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence, recognizing at least 10 different types of violence, such as psychological, physical, patrimonial, economic, or obstetric violence, among others. These laws also acknowledge 10 types of modalities or areas where violence can occur, whether within families, workplaces, relationships, institutions, or digital spaces. These laws include measures for protection, care, and follow-up for cases of violence.

Another measure that has notably expanded spaces for women's decision-making, particularly in the political sphere, is gender quotas. A recent electoral reform in Mexico stipulates that 50% of candidacies for popularly elected positions must be held by women. Likewise, at both national and local levels, legislative bodies are now balanced with equal numbers of men and women, achieved through laws and criteria applied by electoral authorities for the allocation of proportional representation spaces among political parties. It's important to note that a recent reform in the Organic Law of the CESA establishes that gender parity should be sought in the representation of diverse sectors within the Council. Ideally, out of the 30 available spaces, 15 should be occupied by women and 15 by men. However, while substantial progress has been made in the political sphere, the private sector lags behind significantly in terms of gender equality. As of 2021, the "Women in Business" study by the consultancy firm Grant Thornton reported that 35% of companies in Mexico have women in senior management positions. However, data from the Mexican Stock Exchange (BMV)