

ILO Governing Body - 340th Session

Decision by correspondence (21/10)



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Agenda Item: Mid-term report on the Implementation of the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018-21
Agenda Section: Institutional Section (INS)
Agenda Ref: GB.340/INS/7

UK Written Statement

The UK supports the IMEC written statement.

The UK welcomes this mid-term review of the 2018-21 ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality and shares the Office's concern that progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in the world of work has been very slow globally and, in some cases, has reversed.

The UK is one of the first countries in the world to introduce gender pay gap reporting and is committed to eliminating the gender pay gap entirely.

To support more mothers – and fathers - to return to and remain in work, the UK has doubled the amount of free childcare available to working parents of three and four-year-old children, introduced shared parental leave and the right to request flexible working.

And we are supporting returners – i.e. those who have taken extended time out of employment for caring responsibilities - to re-enter the labour market. Through this programme of work, we have awarded some £1.5 million to sixteen organisations supporting returners in the private sector and have also launched public sector programmes that target key workforces, such as social workers and police investigators.

The economic empowerment of women and girls is central to achieving genuinely inclusive growth and is fundamental for the full realisation of human rights. If half its population faces unnecessary barriers, no country can achieve sustained economic development. Women's economic empowerment has positive impacts on economic growth, firm performance and human development outcomes.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate gender inequality and there is a risk we will see a significant reversal in gender equality gains.

Women will be hit hard by the economic fallout. They tend to earn less, save less, and hold less secure jobs so are less able to weather economic shocks. Female-headed households are particularly vulnerable.

When we talk about Building Back Better, it must include Building Back Better on gender and place women and girls at its heart.

So the ILO must continue to promote gender equality through the implementation of the ILO Strategic Plan 2018-2021 - both through its programmes and also within the Office to ensure improvements to meet targets under each of the six UN-SWAP categories. The UK would welcome further information on the concrete ways in which the action plan would strategically position the ILO in the United Nations reform, as proposed in the original decision point b.

At this mid-point of the current action plan, we underline the importance of the delivery of the targets that have not been met.

The UK is keen to identify ways of sharing lessons learned from UK policies to increase gender equality in the labour market, such as the gender pay gap reporting, childcare policies, flexible working, parental leave and support to those returning to the workforce.

Finally, recognising that gender equality and the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work are distinct, but given the fact that violence and harassment is one of the root causes of gender inequality, the UK welcomes the adoption of the Violence and Harassment Convention last year and would like to know whether the Office plans to build the monitoring of violence and harassment into the final stage of the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018-21.