

**Workshop on Enhancing the Participation of Women Entrepreneurs and Traders in
Government Procurement**

25 June 2018

***Opening Session - "Government procurement markets and their importance for inclusive
economic development: relevance for the Buenos Aires Declaration, Trade and Women's
Economic Empowerment".***

Opening remarks by Dr. Corina Cojocaru, Chargée d'affaires a.i. for the WTO
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organizations in Geneva

Thank you, Ambassador Ngarambe,

**Mr. Director General, Madam Executive Director, Excellencies, Distinguished
Delegates,**

It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to address you today and I would like first to **express our sincere gratitude** to WTO Director-General, Mr. Roberto Azevêdo, ITC Executive Director, Ms. Arancha Gonzalez and Deputy General Counsel from the EBRD, Mr. Norbert Seiler, for joining us today on this special occasion and for your insightful remarks which will undoubtedly stimulate our discussions today.

Republic of Moldova is honored to host this event, co-organized together with WTO, ITC and EBRD. For our country, today's event carries a double significance. On one hand, as signatory of the **Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment**, Republic of Moldova attaches great importance to supporting the participation of women in economic and trade-related activities and building a more inclusive trading system. On the other hand, as a Member of the **Government Procurement Agreement**, Republic of Moldova has embarked on a comprehensive reform process, in order to ensure that public procurement is in line with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination, equal treatment and good governance as outlined in the revised GPA.

The role of women empowerment in the Republic of Moldova needs to be revitalized in order to ensure a real balance between men and women in the economical field because only 28% are women entrepreneurs, and the employment rate among women is 37% although, women constitute 52% of the total population in our country. Usually women earn on average 13% less than men. In the political field, we have advanced a lot, because from 13 members of the Cabinet, 5 are women, including the Deputy Prime-Minister. Also, we have 20.6% women mayors elected in 2015, and 18% of our Ambassadors abroad are women.

Public procurement accounts for around **one-fifth of global gross domestic product (GDP)**. In Republic of Moldova, this figure is at **around 10%**. Therefore, it is vital for the authorities in charge to improve the public procurement process in order to produce tangible results in efficiency and economic growth.

In this regard, it is of utmost importance to adjust the way we think about public procurement and what the main focus of the process should be.

We have to think out of the box. Here I refer to **the shift from having as main criteria of assigning contracts the cost of service to the model which focuses on authentic public value produced and takes into account a wide range of factors**. As a result, public procurement can become an important policy tool to foster inclusive economic development, empowering women to fully participate in this process and reap the benefits, as the expenditure of public funds will go towards public benefit and will address concrete challenges faced by our societies.

By investing in women-owned businesses and SMEs which are mostly owned by women, **including through public procurement, which is a tool operating at the intersection of the government's regulatory and buying powers**, governments will ultimately invest in creating jobs and economic expansion.

Of course, if we want to achieve the inclusive economic development goals, **we have to work together – governments, private sector, civil society and international organizations**. This is why I am pleased that today's workshop includes representatives of all the stakeholders, who will present their efforts in making a change in their respective activities, thus contributing to the common comprehensive effort.

During the first session, we will have the opportunity to hear from international experts and government representatives about the links between trade, government procurement and women empowerment and the role of the GPA in opening up significant economic opportunities for women. And I am honored that the State Secretary from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova will contribute to the discussions during this session.

As the world's principal tool for facilitating trade in relation to government procurement markets, and representing a trade-opening instrument that also recognizes the need for good governance mechanisms, built around the WTO's fundamental principles of non-discrimination, transparency and procedural fairness, **the revised GPA has an important role in unlocking procurement markets for previously excluded groups**. These principles promote equal access to public procurement markets by all suppliers, including women business entrepreneurs in accessing new business opportunities in the public procurement sector.

But we need to ensure that the GPA provisions are fully implemented in the rules governing public procurement at the regional and national level. When structuring these rules, **governments should include increased participation by women entrepreneurs in public procurement and in the economy more broadly**. Governments can take concrete steps to eliminate common barriers that women-owned businesses tend to face. These could include: **reducing bidding thresholds, improving accessibility of information, reducing bidding costs, implementing e-procurement systems, training and certifying women entrepreneurs – options for inclusive and smart procurement**. And on this topic, we look forward to hearing from experts and private sector representatives during our second session, which will focus on practical lessons and country experience.

Another aspect I would like to touch upon before concluding my opening remarks is the **participation of the representatives of the private sector**, both as speakers during the second session, as well as those who are attending this workshop.

We see great value in the role of the private sector companies, who can adopt employment practices and participate in accreditation schemes which will certify their commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal number 5 on gender equality through the empowerment of women and girls.

As a conclusion to my intervention, I would like to **encourage creativity in enhancing the participation of women entrepreneurs and traders in public procurement and make use of the many tools to foster market participation through targeted actions.** The aim we set in front of us might seem complicated and challenging, but through each step we take in leveraging public procurement in support of women-owned businesses, our societies will become more inclusive and the benefits will be distributed without leaving anyone behind.

Let us continue our commitment in order to see this objective achieved and to establish a **clear roadmap for future action on enhancing women participation in trade and public procurement.**

I thank you.