

## **Committee on Government Procurement**

### **BUENOS AIRES DECLARATION ON TRADE AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

#### **WORKSHOP ON ENHANCING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND TRADERS IN GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT**

**MONDAY, 25 JUNE 2018, PERHAPS AT 12:30 PM**

#### **ROOM S2**

#### Note for the Chairman, John Newham

1. Your Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen, dear Speakers.
2. We've now reached the closing session of this workshop. I'm well aware that a small reception, generously sponsored by the delegation of Moldova, is awaiting you. So I'll try to be brief and not delay you too much from tasting the Moldovan delicacies and wine.
3. I'd like to reflect a little on what we've learned this morning and provide some concluding remarks. In doing so, if I remind you of any questions or comments you wish to make, I'll ensure you have an opportunity to do so before I finish.
4. As Chairman of the Committee on Government Procurement, I'm well aware of the importance of global government procurement markets for economic growth and well-being. Having participated in the Ministerial Meeting last December, I was also aware of the Buenos Aires Declaration on

Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment and the enhanced role the WTO seeks to play in advancing this topic. Nevertheless, I found the workshop today highly instructive and have certainly learned a lot especially in terms of the linkages between the goal of women's economic empowerment and - government procurement as a lever in achieving that goal.

5. Today's discussion has impressively demonstrated how government procurement; trade; and economic empowerment of women can work together in achieving more inclusive and sustainable outcomes to the benefit of all of our societies.

6. We've heard how procurement markets are important for women businesses due to the markets' size but also due to their role in providing the public infrastructure these businesses need to export. Women businesses can participate in procurement markets effectively only when those markets function well, based on the principles of openness, transparency, integrity and fair competition. Clearly more needs to be done in order to level the playing field for women businesses and enable them to sell to governments worldwide.

7. This organisation was founded in order for our businesses to have international trade opportunities. So our ultimate goal needs to be for women businesses to increase their exports by winning public contracts not only locally, but globally. If we want to achieve this, we need to be ambitious.

8. In today's opening session, our host, Moldova, and three important organizations, the WTO, ITC, and EBRD have pledged their support for this goal - at the highest level. DG Azevêdo said clearly that we can and must do more to ensure that trade supports the economic empowerment of women and that government procurement and the GPA are important tools in that regard. The direction is clear – but what are the steps we need to take?

9. How exactly should we take action? What tools are the most effective? What policies need to be adopted? Who needs to be on board? Answering these questions was the purpose of the two technical sessions we held. And I think we were able to provide at least some answers here.

10. In Session 1, we considered some international best practices in government procurement that can be harnessed to enhance the participation of women business in procurement markets, and presented some empirical research.

11. The role of the GPA in building a strong foundation for a sound procurement system that levels the playing field for women as "newcomers" was also presented on. And without the GPA, access for women businesses to the most economically relevant markets would indeed be hard to achieve.

12. The EBRD reinforced the message that lowering the barrier to entry is not only good for women businesses, but also provides for good procurement outcomes. E-procurement systems that help fight corruption and create accessibility and transparency across borders are particularly helpful in this regard.

13. Our host today, Moldova as a GPA party has made important strides by creating a full-cycle procurement system. Indeed, it will be interesting to see if Moldova's developments in the areas of data availability; e-commerce; and e-procurement will help identify the most effective tools in bringing women businesses into procurement markets.

14. We also heard from Chatham House, which has carried out a study on gender-smart procurement as driver of change, looking at economies such as the EU, Australia, the US and Chile, and the lessons to be learned from them.

15. In Session 2, we reflected on Chile, arguably having the economy that so far has delivered most in terms of achieving gender equality in procurement markets. An integrated approach, implementing advanced e-procurement tools, the inclusion of gender criteria in procurements, as well as training for women businesses provide powerful drivers to success. The share of women participating in the public procurement system in Chile reached 36.5 per cent in 2016, a figure that corresponds to more than 21,345 women quoting on tenders,

offering contract terms or receiving purchase orders. Impressive.

16. We considered other GPA parties. Korea has long been a forerunner in implementing e-procurement tools to create open and inclusive procurement markets. Switzerland, besides being a champion of internationally successful small and medium-sized businesses, has managed to integrate equal pay elements into their procurement system, and in that way is making important contributions to the economic empowerment of women.

17. And some noteworthy progress has been made by non-GPA parties also. Kenya showed us how developing economies with an emerging procurement regime can support women's participation in open procurement markets, and can build political and public support for targeted programmes in an effective manner.

18. The last word in Session 2 went back to our host, Moldova. We heard encouraging messages from the business sector and its clear interest in expanding women participation from national markets, to global ones.

19. In summary, clearly positive synergies abound between best procurement practices, trade, and the economic empowerment of women.

20. We'll shortly hear from Anoush who has some brief announcements to make on future events in this series. Then I'll finish with a personal reflection. But before doing so, I would like to provide an opportunity to you for any comments and suggestions or indeed any reflections that you may have.

21. The floor is open.

*[Any comments can be noted. Chair's summary, as appropriate.]*

22. Thank you all for your inputs. Turning to Anoush then – please Anoush tell us about what we can look forward to in the coming months.

*[Anoush will make a brief announcement.]*

23. Thanks Anoush. This just about brings us to the end. But before I conclude I'd like to say a few personal remarks on this subject before we go.

24. First, thanks again to all of you for attending this workshop and contributing to its success. And thanks especially to the speakers as well as to Moldova and the co-organizers (ITC, EBRD, WTO, and the International Gender Champions).

25. Concluding this workshop is one of the final functions for me to do as I shortly vacate the position of chair of the WTO Committee on Government Procurement and return to Ireland having completed of my posting.

26. Another organisation that I have had the pleasure of dealing with is the International Labour Organisation which, as many of you know, once occupied this campus. The ILO, along with the League of Nations, was founded by Treaty of Versailles. Part XIII of that Treaty also known as the “The Labour Covenant” is displayed on the large ceramic panel outside of Room W just inside the main entrance. If you have the opportunity to see it and read it I would encourage you to do so as it makes for some short but very interesting reading.

27. It says “universal peace... can be established only if it is based upon social justice”. I think these words resonate with the first line of the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment which acknowledges the importance of a gender perspective and inclusive economic growth - and the key role that gender-responsive policies can play in achieving sustainable socioeconomic development. The Joint Declaration commits the signatories to work “together in the WTO to remove barriers for women’s economic empowerment and increase their participation in trade”.

28. Returning to the ceramic panel outside Room W, the signatories were, and again I quote, “moved by sentiments of justice and humanity as well as by the desire to secure the permanent peace of the world”.

29. These are powerful words and strong sentiments - scripted by our diplomatic forerunners who no doubt had a real

conviction to change the world for the better coming so soon after a period of history which demonstrates how cruel the world can be when diplomacy fails. We've been reminded starkly in recent times, that social injustice, real or perceived is a strong and driving force for social and political change. So achieving inclusivity is not an abstract ideal, but a vital and worthwhile goal that requires ambition and action across many areas. We've touched on it earlier today in terms of how public procurement systems can encourage or inhibit female participation.

30. We are the WTO. So it's for us to step up to the plate – to do the heavy lifting and to have ambition. And so I would hope that, in a small way, and with the help of today's workshop, we are motivated - not just to “work towards”; not just to “facilitate or enhance” participation but to be more ambitious - to achieve full Participation of Women Entrepreneurs and Traders in Government Procurement.

31. Now – let's continue our conversations outside with the refreshments that have been provided by our hosts, Moldova.

32. Thank you.