



Global Compact
Network South Africa



The Compact Newsletter

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Accountability and Consequences Necessary to Advance Gender Equality in South Africa

Johannesburg – To achieve gender equality, South Africa requires a combination of strong accountability measures and enforcement of consequence for non-performing organizations, as well as deliberate strategies for women to access available economic opportunities.

This was the key message delivered by Dr Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka, the UN Under Secretary-General and Executive Director for United Nations Women, during a joint Business Leaders event organized by Global Compact Network South Africa, UN Women SA and the Commission for Gender Equality.

The event, commemorating Women's Month in South Africa, brought together participants

UPCOMING EVENTS

Join us as we partner with AfrAsia Bank to support the launch of the Global Compact Network Mauritius during AfrAsia Bank Sustainability Summit (ABSS). We encourage South African companies with operations in Mauritius to attend. For more information, please see: <http://sustainabilitysummit.afasiabank.com/> or contact the organising team at: abss@afasiabank.com.

In Other News

We are excited to announce the launch of our website. <http://globalcompactsa.org.za/>

from business, academia, the UN and civil society organizations. A panel consisting of Mlambo Ngcuka, Bonang Mohale, CEO of Business Leadership South Africa, Trudi Makhaya, Economic Advisor to the President, Sazini Mojapelo, Head of Citizenship at Absa Group and Keketso Maema, CEO of the Commission for Gender Equality, addressed the many challenges facing women in the workplace.

The panellists urged business leaders to advance the rights of women and reduce pervasive levels of gender inequality in South Africa. Reinforcing the issue of accountability and consequences, Mlambo Ngcuka advocated for the strengthening of laws that would make unequal pay by employers punishable. Supporting existing structures like the Commission for Gender Equality to effectively deliver on their mandate would also help to ensure accountability, she added.

Commenting on poor performance on gender equality in the corporate sector, Mohale said that CEOs and business leaders need to be “purposeful, deliberate and conscious” in addressing inequality. He added that CEOs of companies should be able to access statistics reflecting pay inequality in companies and reverse the pay inequality trends.

Gender discrimination manifests at workplaces in various ways, from poor representation of women on company boards to company practices around promotions. “We see many instances where women are more than qualified for a position, but when the time comes for promotions there is a tendency for corporate leaders to promote those that look like themselves – and these are usually men,” said Mojapelo.

Mlambo Ngcuka also called for the corporate sector to address the crisis of sexual violence which has reached crisis levels in most workplaces, including in churches and even in the UN. Maema said that sex for jobs was prevalent and added that a culture change

was required to protect victims of abuse in workplaces.

Drawing from international best practice, Mlambo-Ngcuka advised that workplaces should have the required leadership and policy mechanisms in place to prevent sexual violence at work and to protect employees from further stigmatisation when they report Gender Based Violence. Companies also need to consider external reporting mechanisms as a safer option for victims of violence at the workplace.

Mlambo Ngcuka applauded the proposal by the organisers of #TheTotalShutDown for a National Gender Summit and appealed to business to offer the required resources for the Summit to happen.

The Global Compact Network South Africa, UN Women South Africa and Commission for Gender Equality have established a partnership to assist companies through an integrated turnaround process towards gender equality. Companies can start by signing up to the [Women Empowerment Principles](#) and undertaking a [Gender Gap Analysis](#) to determine strengths and areas of further action on a range of factors including leadership; the gender pay gap; women’s health, safety and well-being at work; enterprise development and procurement; advocacy; and disclosure & reporting.

You can also link here to read the [Global Women Empowerment Principles Trends Report 2018](#)

For more information, please contact [Dr Achieng Ojwang](#)

As a way forward, various practical suggestions were given:

- Gender based budgeting, once a practice at the national level, could be reintroduced and gender audits for employers should be considered with consequences for non-performing organisations, said Makhaya.
- Companies that do not comply with gender equality should be named and shamed;
- Women should be central in the Land Reform and Mining Charter process and new strategies for women to access opportunities early are required. Former South African First Lady, Zanele Mbeki suggested that appropriate training programmes be put in place for women to fully benefit from the opportunities.
- Recourse to the law is an option and a class action lawsuit can be considered, as gender discrimination is against South Africa's Constitution.
- Business schools' curriculum should change to prepare CEOs to drive inclusion
- Boards of Companies should hire several women at a time (instead of one at a time which is the common practice), so they have enough support on the board to drive gender equality.
- Strategic business units such as procurement need to hire more women and men in those positions should be trained for inclusive procurement.



*key message delivered by
Dr Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka*



Panellists

In her closing remarks, Nardos Bekele-Thomas, the UN Resident Coordinator in South Africa advised that a deep review of existing regulations and instruments may be required to determine alignment in favour of gender equality. She called for a network of watchdogs for gender equality and a self-regulatory way to push for transformational change.

Our mailing address is:

achiengo@globalcompactsa.org.za

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info@globalcompactsa.org.za

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+27 11 771 4142

26 Melville Road | Illovo |

c/o Gordon Institute of

Business Science

PO Box 787602 | Sandton |

2146 | South Africa

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