

**Speech of the Director General of the Cyprus  
Employers & Industrialists Federation (OEB),**

**Mr. Michael Antoniou**

**107<sup>th</sup> ILO Conference Plenary**

**Geneva, 5 June 2018**

Dear Chairperson,

I wish to begin my speech by congratulating the Director General and his Office for this year's report regarding ILO's *Women at Work Initiative*. The persisting inequality between men and women is a truth that is hard to swallow; globally, women are only 70% as likely as men to be in the labour force, earn approximately 20% less than men and are more likely to be the victims of violence and harassment at work. The Director General's report is a reminder that more needs to be done and we look forward to evaluating further its findings and recommendations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world of work is changing and is changing fast. New technologies are eliminating entire industries and new ones are created. Terms such as 'big data' and '3D printing' are now part of our vocabulary. Advances in artificial intelligence, automation and robotics are already transforming beyond recognition the way we work. Boundaries between people, technology and the physical world are becoming increasingly blurred. The ways to grasp the opportunities and maximize the benefits of these developments, should have been on our agenda, and inequality should have been discarded to the dustbin of history a long time ago. Unfortunately, this is not the case as we find ourselves today still discussing issues that are otherwise self-explanatory.

In the pursuit for equality, legislating is useful but not sufficient.

Businesses need to do more and employer organisations are duty-bound to encourage practices

and norms that can bridge, and eventually eliminate, all gaps.

This is the moral thing to do, this is the normal thing to do, and at the end of the day, this is the profitable thing to do because equality is the foundation of robust enterprises and the cornerstone of competitive economies.

Unless we recognise the problem and transform ourselves, we cannot bring the change we want.

Let me tell you a small part of what my Federation has been doing during the years: We begun by making equality in the workplace one of our top priorities. To that end, we amended our Federation's Articles of Association making equality part of our mandate.

In 2004, we became the first social partner Organisation in Cyprus to prepare and disseminate among businesses, a model code of practice for the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace.

In 2012 we developed a Gender Equality Certification

System, as part of a project run by the Ministry of Labour, under which enterprises implementing equal treatment and equal pay principles, are certified as “Equality Employers”.

In 2014, we initiated the *Sound Labour Relations* project which is co-funded by the European Union and the government of Cyprus, through which gender equality at work is actively promoted.

In 2016, together with the Cyprus Association of Women, we launched the *Women Excellence Awards* to promote positive role models and challenge stereotypes about women.

By actively participating in the fight against inequalities, we consciously make Employers part of the solution and we will continue doing this with all available means, in close co-operation with this Office.

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no doubt that the world of work in our planet, with the invaluable contribution of this Institution, is spectacularly better than 100 years ago and it is constantly improving.

Nevertheless, inequality between men and women at work is a collective failure that needs to be addressed. Inequality takes different forms in different countries, and different expressions in different cultures but, no matter how it is disguised,

inequality is equally painful for those suffering its consequences.

Let's make ILO's "Women at Work Initiative",  
a global tool,  
for a global redress,  
of a global mistake.

Thank you.

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