

In cooperation with:



Partners in
Transformation
Agency for Business and
Economic Development



GLOBAL
SUPPLY CHAIN
COALITION 

A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR BUSINESS AND SOCIETY

Advancing Gender Equality in Global Supply Chains



**HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE
12 March 2026**

Background

On 12 March 2026, UN Women convened a high-level roundtable during the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, bringing together leaders from government, business, international organizations and civil society. The session created space to shape the future direction of the Global Supply Chain Coalition and identify concrete avenues for joint action.

The roundtable brought together policy makers and industry leaders to:

1. Position gender equality as a core driver of resilient, responsible and competitive supply chains.
2. Examine the full ecosystem required to advance gender-responsive supply chains, spanning policy frameworks, procurement practices, corporate leadership and multi-stakeholder partnerships.
3. Identify practical and scalable pathways for implementation through stronger collaboration and shared solutions.



Summary of discussion

- **Gender equality emerged as both a human rights imperative and a strategic economic issue**, with direct implications for supply chain resilience, productivity and long-term value creation. Across many sectors, supply chains continue to rely heavily on women's labour. Yet women are disproportionately concentrated in lower-paid, insecure or informal roles, and gender-specific measures to protect them remain limited. This imbalance creates risks, including labour instability, productivity losses, reputational exposure and operational disruption. Conversely, companies that invest in equal pay, safe working conditions and leadership opportunities for women tend to benefit from stronger workforce retention, more reliable supplier relationships and enhanced resilience.
- **Global supply chains represent one of the most powerful levers for advancing gender equality at scale**, connecting companies with millions of workers across production countries. Yet progress remains uneven. While corporate awareness and commitments have increased, implementation has lagged, particularly beyond first-tier suppliers. Many companies have policies addressing general labour standards, but fewer include concrete gender-related requirements such as equal pay, anti-harassment measures or living wages.
- At the same time, recent advances in gender pay gap transparency illustrate how **regulation can accelerate corporate action**. Legislative frameworks have driven measurable improvements in disclosure, underscoring the influence governments hold in shaping business behaviour. This role extends beyond regulation: countries that host major multinational companies—or lead globally significant industries—are uniquely positioned to set expectations that cascade through supply chains. Sector leadership at national level can therefore serve as a powerful entry point for embedding gender equality into global production systems.
- **Public policy, development cooperation and trade frameworks** were identified as critical enablers of change. Large-scale initiatives such as the EU's Global Gateway—a €300 billion investment initiative—have the potential to reshape supply chains, particularly in emerging markets, but require stronger integration of gender considerations and deeper engagement with national and local actors. Aligning financing, technical assistance and regulatory frameworks can help translate ambition into practical action within company operations.
- **Incentive-based approaches can play a catalytic role alongside regulation**: Certification schemes, preferential procurement policies and financial incentives can encourage companies to adopt gender-responsive practices, particularly in sectors where progress has been slower. At the same time, the emphasis remains on implementation, taking practical steps even where data and frameworks are still evolving, and strengthening approaches over time through learning and iteration.

- Within the private sector, the **shift from commitment to implementation** is beginning to take shape. Gender equality is increasingly being integrated into leadership targets, supplier codes of conduct and workforce programmes. UN Women collaborates with industry platforms to pilot gender-responsive procurement approaches, embedding gender criteria into supplier selection and evaluation. However, many procurement and supply chain functions still lack the tools, guidance and incentives needed to operationalize these efforts at scale. Effective implementation depends on board-level oversight, internal accountability and practical instruments that translate strategy into day-to-day decision-making.
- **Data systems and technology are central to this transition:** The availability, comparability and integration of gender data across supply chains remain limited, constraining both risk management and performance tracking. Embedding gender indicators into procurement and supplier management systems offers a practical pathway to reduce reporting burdens while strengthening transparency. Improved data systems also enable investors, regulators and companies to identify gaps, allocate resources more effectively and build a stronger business case for action.
- **Social dialogue and stakeholder engagement remain essential:** Ensuring that gender equality measures reflect the realities faced by workers across supply chains meaningful engagement with trade unions, worker representatives and local organizations strengthens both relevance and accountability. Greater inclusion of stakeholders from production countries—particularly in the Global South—is critical for designing solutions that are grounded in practice and sustainable over time.
- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration is a defining condition for progress:** Initiatives such as the *Global Supply Chain Coalition* provide a platform to align standards, share practical tools and scale solutions across industries and regions. By connecting governments, companies, investors and civil society, such platforms help bridge the persistent gap between policy ambition and business practice, while offering concrete avenues for engagement through pilots, policy dialogue and joint initiatives.
- Overall, the discussion reflected a clear shift: **gender equality is no longer a peripheral consideration in supply chains, but a strategic determinant of competitiveness, resilience and sustainable growth.** Advancing this agenda requires moving from commitment to consistent implementation, supported by coherent policies, practical tools, stronger data systems and sustained collaboration across the full supply chain ecosystem.





Priorities for action

Five key areas for collective action were highlighted:

- 1. Align policy frameworks and incentives:** Ensure that legislation, certification schemes and financial incentives reinforce gender equality objectives while remaining feasible for businesses to implement. Continue with GSCC dialogue and convenings to align with global frameworks and trends to ensure practical application.
- 2. Strengthen practical guidance for companies:** Built on the strong foundation of the Women's Empowerment Principles – already used by thousands of companies – develop and align clear frameworks for gender-responsive procurement and supply chain management that are practical, scalable, and aligned with existing standards.
- 3. Improve gender data and transparency:** Expand the availability of gender-disaggregated data in supply chains and integrate gender indicators into digital procurement and supplier management systems.
- 4. Strengthen Global South participation:** Ensure that women workers, suppliers and local stakeholders in production countries are actively involved in shaping and implementing the Global Supply Chain Coalition, leveraging UN Women network and expertise at the country level.
- 5. Mobilize investors and financial actors:** Engage institutional investors and financial institutions to encourage investment in companies that demonstrate strong gender equality practices in their supply chains.

Learn more:

www.weps.org/global-supply-chain-coalition
gsccl@unwomen.org