Statement on 
Gender Equality 
June 2021

COVID-19 has caused a health crisis for billions 
around the world and inflicted the worst economic 
pain in decades. And wherever we look a key 
theme recurs: no matter the geography or wealth 
of the country, women and girls bear the heaviest 
burden of economic hardship. That hurts all of us.

As leaders representing leading economic 
institutions, we share this urgent message: to 
rebuild our global economy and improve the lives 
of all people, governments must prioritise gender 
equality in their economic recovery strategies. In 
particular, we must put in place childcare policies 
that better support both genders and ensure 
women do not disappear from workplaces. 
Supporting women and girls will not only aid 
those most affected by this crisis, it will build 
stability and opportunity 
for all.

World Economic Forum data suggests the 
pandemic has increased the time needed to close 
the global gender gap from 99.5 years to 135.6. 
That is an entire generation of girls robbed of the 
opportunity, before they are even born, to stand on 
equal economic footing as male counterparts.

And women and girls already faced daunting 
economic odds. From accepting gender pay 
gaps, to neglecting childcare, governments have 
not prioritised their needs. The result is a feeble, 
patchwork economic infrastructure - particularly 
in fields such as caregiving, retail, and tourism, 
where women are disproportionately represented 
- that leaves women struggling. For too long these 
shortfalls have been dismissed as “women’s issues”, but COVID-19 has exposed the deep 
structural problems they have created, all but 
halting progress toward gender parity. Globally, 
64 million women have lost their jobs during the 
pandemic—indeed, women’s jobs are nearly two 
times more vulnerable than men’s.

Here’s the truth: allowing gender inequality to 
fester made us more susceptible to the shock of 
a pandemic. And it has made the road to 
recovery even harder. But there is hope. The 
pandemic response is a tremendous opportunity 
for governments to accelerate progress toward 
gender equality.

Governments must focus on three policy areas 
to ensure that economic recovery prioritises 
women and girls, underpins an inclusive future, 
and ensures the world is prepared to withstand 
the next crisis.

- First, governments must ensure that money, 
stimulus efforts, and social protection 
schemes get directly into the hands of 
women.
- Second, countries must close gender data 
gaps and strengthen monitoring, evaluation, 
and data systems to support more effective 
public policy.
- Third, governments must reduce the burden 
of unpaid care work and support better 
childcare to strengthen women’s labor force 
participation.

We have no time to waste. 2021 presents key 
opportunities, including the Generation Equality 
Forum and the rethinking of loans and support 
for the world’s poorest countries, to push forward 
with new resources and programs. The risks 
of inaction cannot be overstated. Refusing to 
economically support women and girls will 
not just set this recovery back, it will leave our 
economies more vulnerable to future shocks.

Only if we seize on this opportunity to prioritise 
gender equality can we build a more prosperous 
world for all.

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