

## CONCEPT NOTE

### CSW61 – 12<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL HELVI SIPILÄ SEMINAR

16 March 2017

THE INTERNATIONAL HELVI SIPILÄ SEMINAR series addresses challenging issues that affect women and their lives locally and globally in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The event organized during the CSW61 is the 12<sup>th</sup> seminar in this series.

With the title **Empowered futures – sustainable economies** the seminar focuses on role of women in the sustainable socio-economic development and the changing world of work.

The empowerment, equal participation and the leadership of women is crucial to the global sustainable development. The changing world of work entails both challenges and opportunities for women and these have to be thoroughly assessed. Which policies and programs best protect and promote women's and girls' human rights, access to labor market and equal pay? What is the impact of economic empowerment in post-conflict situations? How to best address the specific needs of for instance young women or refugee and immigrant women and to promote their economic empowerment?

These questions will be examined at the Helvi Sipilä seminar from different angles by three distinguished speakers:

In her presentation *Women in the Labor Market: Evolution of Gender Pay Gap Throughout Career* **Sari Pekkala Kerr** provides an insight regarding the different factors driving the gender pay gap.

It is important to give women voice in peace building processes and **Malayah Harper** explores the impact of the economic aspect in her presentation *Economic empowerment work(s) in the peace building context*.

In her presentation *Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals: Women thriving for themselves, the economy and society!* **Elisa Fernandez** shares some examples from the ground and reflects on experiences and strategies that are showing success in empowering women and promoting sustainable economic opportunities for the most discriminated groups, in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

The seminar is organized jointly by the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations, the Finnish Federation of Graduate Women, the National Council of Women in Finland, the Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations – NYTKIS, Finland National Committee for UN Women and the Young Women's Christian Association of Finland YWCA.

## **Helvi Sipilä Seminar at CSW since 2006**

Helvi Sipilä was a Finnish lawyer, diplomat and the first female Assistant Secretary-General of the UN. Sipilä received numerous national and international awards including twelve honorary doctorates, and she was granted the honorary title of Minister in 2001.

Helvi Sipilä also held leadership position in several associations, including the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, International Federation of Women Lawyers and the International Council of Women.

Helvi Sipilä's profession in law was exceptional at the time. When she announced the opening of her own law firm in 1943, she became the second woman in the Finnish history to practice as a lawyer. She ran her own law firm for 30 years. Private entrepreneurship enabled her to engage in extensive social activities, including service as a member of governmental missions.

While Assistant Secretary-General, she was appointed Secretary-General of the UN World Conference on Women in Mexico 1975. She continued to work as a consultant for the UN until 1981, in order to promote the UN Voluntary Fund for the Advancement of Women, later known as UNIFEM, set up during the UN Decade for Women 1976-1985.

Helvi Sipilä was a well-known and respected advocate for equality and women's rights. Her important legacy will live on.

The first international Helvi Sipilä Seminar was organized at the CSW-50 in 2006 by the Finnish Federation of University Women (FFUW) in collaboration with four other Finnish Women's organizations to honor the work of Minister Helvi Sipilä.