



## Concept Note

# Regional Commemoration of International Women's Day

8 March 2018

### Background

International Women's Day (IWD) 2018 will focus on advancing women's voice, participation and leadership towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in rural and urban settings. The global theme for IWD, "*Time is Now: rural and urban activists transforming women's lives*", speaks to key negotiations taking place at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (New York, 12<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2018)<sup>1</sup> and responds to key concerns related to shrinking spaces for women and civil society participation and leadership in democratic and economic governance. Importantly, the theme has been identified to propel key messages related to women's advancement on the work floor in line with current affairs and campaigns (#Metoo; Time'sUp initiative).

The observance of the day will be organized by the Asia-Pacific UN RCM Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (TWG-GEEW), co-chaired by ESCAP and UN Women. To be aligned with the 2018 global theme for International Women's Day, this year's observance will focus on an interactive dialogue that aims to provide space to civil society representatives/ women's voices and voices of rural women working to transform the lives of women in the Asia and Pacific region to interact with the UN and members of the diplomatic corps based in Thailand as well as Thai government representatives.

The event will be held at the United Nations Conference Centre, with participation from across the UN, diplomatic community and Thai government representatives. Invitees will also include representatives of other international organizations, CSOs, and youth groups.

### Objective

The key objectives are:

- To advance dialogue between rural and urban women's rights activists in the region, policy and programme developers and decision-makers in the region as well as bring visibility to the key issues related to IWD's theme "*Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives.*"
- To bring together different stakeholders to discuss key considerations, challenges, gaps and opportunities with regard to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the divergent context of women living in rural and urban areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Theme of CSW 62 "*Challenges and opportunities in achieving in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women*"



## Tentative Programme

### **Asia-Pacific Commemoration of International Women's Day 2018: Interactive Dialogue on "Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives."**

Venue: Theatre, Ground Floor, United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok

Date and time: 09:30am – 10:45am, 8 March 2018

1. Video
2. Opening reflections and welcome by **Shamshad Akhtar**, Under-Secretary-General of United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP and **Miwa Kato**, Regional Director, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
3. Interactive Dialogue:

Moderator: **Fiza Farhan**, Social Entrepreneur, Member of the UN High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment and advisor to the Government of Punjab, as Chairperson to Chief Minister Punjab's Task Force on Women Empowerment

Panellists:

- **H.E. Raushan Yesbulatova**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Kingdom of Thailand and Permanent Representative to ESCAP
- **Mary Jane N. Real**, Co-Director, Urgent Action Fund - Asia Pacific
- **Mahmuda Begum Shelly**, Executive Director, Manob Progoti Shongho, Bangladesh
- **Ho Tran Thanh Huyen**, Youth Programme Officer, Da Nang Youth Union, Viet Nam