



Excellencies, colleagues,

Across the world, women and girls continue to shoulder the majority of unpaid care and domestic work. This unequal distribution comes at a high cost to their health, education, professional opportunities and financial independence, particularly for mothers. It remains a root cause of gender inequality and a major barrier to social development.

Although unpaid care work is essential to sustaining families, communities and economies, it remains largely invisible and undervalued.

Because it is unpaid or underpaid, care work is also perceived as unskilled. This perception is deeply flawed.

Care work—particularly unpaid family care such as parenting—builds a wide range of transferable skills that are highly relevant to today's labour markets and to the complex challenges our societies face. These include organisation and time management, problem-solving, communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, stress management and leadership.

Recognising unpaid care work as real, productive and skill-building work is a critical step toward properly valuing this essential contribution, with far-reaching implications for social development.

First, for human capital development, recognising care-related skills strengthens self-confidence, well-being and social participation. It enables training and employment programmes to build on existing competencies rather than assuming a skills deficit.

Second, for gender equality. Because women perform most unpaid care work, recognising these skills helps challenge the idea that care is “natural” or unskilled women’s work. It supports women’s access to, or re-entry into, the labour market and encourages a more equal sharing of care responsibilities.

Third, recognising unpaid care work as productive legitimises public investment in caregivers, including paid family leave, caregiver allowances, pension credits, affordable childcare and eldercare services, and systems to recognise informal skills. Such investments strengthen social infrastructure, reduce poverty and support demographic resilience.

Finally, care work builds trust, empathy and social cohesion—the foundations of inclusive and sustainable societies—while also supporting economic growth.

To conclude, recognising care-related skills helps acknowledge unpaid care work as vital, valuable and skilled work that underpins our societies. It can contribute to a virtuous circle for gender equality, social justice and development, and to the vision of a “Care Society” set out in the 2022 Buenos Aires commitment.

Thank you.