



Oral Statement
41st session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3
Clustered ID with Working Group on the issue of
human rights and transnational corporations
and other business enterprises
Gender dimensions of the Guiding Principles on
Business and Human Rights

Make Mothers Matter welcomes the report of the Working Group on the gender dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and this imperative “gender guidance”.

Despite existing non-discrimination provisions in the laws of many countries, women continue to experience many forms of discrimination and human rights violations, in the context of business-related activities, which are well articulated in the report.

Amongst these, we would like to draw attention to the so-called “motherhood penalty” - the specific obstacles and discriminations women face in relation to maternity. These include: obstacles to access the labour market, discrimination in hiring and promotion, maternity-related stigmatization, harassment and even unjustified dismissal, and a gender pay gap which is higher for mothers than for women without children and which increases with the number of children.

We are pleased that the proposed gender guidance will tackle some of these specific discriminations faced by mothers and pregnant women. We can only endorse the calls to reduce the gender wage gap, the provisions to support women’s reproductive rights, and the recommendations that businesses enable more work-family balance.

However, the gender guidance falls short of making recommendations to address the main obstacle to substantive Gender Equality – that is, the unequal distribution of unpaid family care work.

We at MMM are calling for more systemic changes. We are calling for business and government policies that promote and support a more equal sharing of the essential work of caring, nurturing and educating the next generation – not only between men and women, but also between families and society. In the long term, everyone benefits.

It is time that the world of work and businesses adapt to people and families, and that the economy serves the wellbeing of people and the planet - not the other way around.

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Make Mothers Matter (MMM) is an international NGO created in 1947 to raise the awareness of policy makers and public opinion on the contribution of mothers to social, cultural and economic development. MMM has no political or religious affiliations, and thus transparently voices the concerns of mothers at international level with permanent MMM representatives at the United Nations (General Consultative Status), UNESCO and the European Union.