

FORWARD

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Businesses worldwide have begun to recognize that advancing and empowering women – the goals of the Women’s Empowerment Principles – is not only the right thing to do, it also makes good business sense.

Driven by research that highlights the correlation between gender equality and strong businesses and economies, and equipped with the Women’s Empowerment Principles as a framework for action, business leaders are beginning to develop policies and practices to ensure that their activities empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. Around 200 business executives from across the world have already signed a CEO Statement of Support for the Principles to demonstrate their commitment to gender equality.

BPW International was one of the first NGOs to recognize the importance of being part of the international multi-stakeholder consultation process launched by the Global Compact and UN Women during March 2009. One year after the launch of the Women’s Empowerment Principles, the Global Compact and UN Women continue to maintain a high level of engagement with BPW International. We acknowledge their contribution to our success in engaging a broader audience in our consultations with the private sector, government and civil society.

While progress made thus far is encouraging, many women continue to face incredible barriers to participating actively in economic life. Women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses struggle to be included in global supply chains. Lack of educational opportunities and violence against women and girls restrict women from reaching their potential. Representation by women in top leadership positions and on corporate boards also remains low.

To fully realize the goals of the Women’s Empowerment Principles—Equality Means Business, we need all stakeholders to work together to shatter the glass ceiling. Since the Principles were launched in 2010, BPW International has helped lead efforts to raise awareness of the Principles and bring them to new audiences through its vast network of affiliates. BPW has worked alongside the UN Global Compact and UN Women to challenge both businesses and governments to recognize the value of the Principles and advocate for change globally.

With the implementation of this practical toolkit, we look forward to continuing to work with BPW to extend the reach of the Women’s Empowerment Principles and bring the voice of women to business.

