

Gender equality: Let's bring the men to the table

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Women 20 (W20) was launched by the G20 in 2015 as a step forward for gender equality. Including men in the challenge could make a telling difference in 2017.

What we have seen in 2016 may have been unimaginable to some but, undoubtedly, it is all part of a global recalibration. A new president for the US; a new, female, prime minister in the UK following Brexit; and many more political, social and economic shifts, amid deepening concerns about global inequality, conflict and climate change. It is quite a list!

But even if the world seems to some to be, as one Financial Times columnist described it, “lurching towards the extremities,” the stage is also set for a year of opportunity in 2017.

Looking ahead to the third Women20 (W20) Summit, in Berlin in April 2017, I feel at once both privileged and restless about our opportunities. Privileged, as Australia’s representative, to build on the great work done by the Brisbane G20 Summit in 2014, which made history by including a specific target to reduce the gender participation gap in G20 economies by 25% by 2025 (see references).

Keep in mind that the G20 is an economic forum and, as my Australian colleague, Susan Harris Rimmer, has argued, it will look decidedly old fashioned if the 2017 German presidency does not take “womenomics” just as seriously by further unlocking the potential of women as drivers of inclusive growth.

I don’t think we need to convince anyone anymore that economies which invest in equality of opportunity—and diversity—will see huge and sustainable growth across all business segments. In fact, according to a much quoted McKinsey report, simply giving more women the same opportunities as men would add \$12 trillion extra to global growth by 2025.

Clearly, we must, at the 2017 W20 summit in April, put the numbers on the table, show the results of quantifiable measurements and reveal the successes and failures or, more importantly, the underlying trend to highlight the direction in which we are heading. The trend will surely signal our own recalibration.

Which brings me to why I’m restless: what about the men?

The W20 is a progressive initiative, which has the capacity to break new ground where the United Nations, or the World Economic Forum, or even ASEAN cannot. We are here to push for the economic empowerment of women in the G20 economies and throughout the world.

There is co-operation with other organisations like the UN and we have strong support from Chancellor Angela Merkel, of course, as chair of the G20 in 2017. True to the charter of the W20, Germany is inviting business women to organise the event, and the National Council of German Women’s Organisations and the Association of German Women Entrepreneurs will be our hosts at the April summit.

The trouble is, our summit will be overwhelmingly made up of women, talking to other women of the world. In my view, we at the W20 are not going to realise our full potential unless we involve men in our conversations and engagement. How can we possibly make progress if we don’t have a diverse and relevant representation?

This bout of restlessness was triggered while on a panel with six women, at the annual OECD Forum in Paris in June 2016, at which we discussed the G20 goal to reduce the gap between male and female workplace participation by 25% by 2025. It was encouraging to see the OECD so committed to this very important target, and raising awareness that it must be measured. However, I often thank, in my

mind, the man in the audience who rose to his feet and asked why there was no man on the panel.

The light switched on! It is so obvious that men need to be included, not excluded, when it comes to economic progress. We talk about diversity, collaboration, and co-operation, but these are all hollow words unless we walk our talk to achieve our goals. Without involving men, we'll become trapped in our own ever-diminishing circle of influence, nodding in furious agreement but frustrated by not making faster progress. By recalibrating, we can achieve more.

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There is plenty to work with as we advance the agenda for 2017. The previous two W20 summits called on G20 Leaders to:

- support entrepreneurship and launch programmes specifically to help women;
- improve women's access to credit, training, information services and technical support;
- put in place measures for governments and big business to include more women as suppliers;
- and most importantly, set targets and report on progress in all areas.

Let's bring the men to the table and hold them accountable as well to these goals and more. After all, 17 of the 20 leaders of the G20 in Brisbane in 2014, all of whom agreed to the 2025 target, were men.

If we can recalibrate in 2017, we will make even more progress at our summit in Germany and that, too, will ease my restlessness.

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www.oecd.org/gender <http://www.oecd.org/gender>