



*Sustainable  
Stock Exchanges  
Initiative*



# HOW STOCK EXCHANGES CAN ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY

## QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

In partnership with:



### WHY GENDER EQUALITY?

Gender equality is a fundamental human right. Despite this, women take home just one tenth of global income, while accounting for two thirds of global working hours. One in three women experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes. Women lag male peers in compensation and in management and leadership roles.

Research shows investing in women can lead to increases in productivity, organisational effectiveness, return on investment and higher consumer satisfaction. Moreover, the global economy could be up to USD 28 trillion larger in 2025 if gender gaps were eliminated, largely by increasing women's participation in the formal labour market. Although capital market participants cannot solve these issues alone, each has a role to play, including stock exchanges.

### KEY ISSUES AND BENEFITS FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Central themes for the private sector addressed throughout international gender equality frameworks include:

- female representation in leadership, which has shown to improve performance metrics such as ROA, ROE, and EPS while reducing volatility;
- pay parity, which will not be reached for well over 100 years at the current rate of progress;
- sexual harassment in the workplace, for which prevention measures have shown to create a more productive work environment, increased job satisfaction, and increased attraction of qualified employees;
- family leave, which can boost employee morale, reducing turnover and making it easier for businesses to retain skilled workers;
- flexible work options, which are increasingly demanded by employees male and female, and can lower turnover rates and increase productivity;
- support for women-owned small businesses, which, if better served, could add around USD 285 billion to the global economy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXCHANGES

The report recommends several actions for stock exchanges to consider to further support gender equality, which will support listed companies and investors in advancing gender equality.

#### DRIVING CHANGE ACROSS ISSUERS:

- 1. Require or encourage listed companies to report:**
  - diversity objectives and how they are achieved;
  - policies that support equality in the workplace;
  - diversity metrics, including percentage of women across all levels of the organisation, pay gap and turnover rates by gender, actions taken to enforce gender requirements across the supply chain, and expenditure on training by gender;
  - performance against SDG 5 targets and gender-specific targets across the other 16 SDGs.
- 2. Engage the market securities regulator to require or encourage listed companies to report on diversity metrics.**
- 3. Require applicants for listing to disclose material convictions or judgements against it for violations of human rights rules, including gender-based violations, in its pre-listing disclosures.**
- 4. Offer a separate listing segment that screens for gender metrics or rank listed companies based on quality and quantity of disclosed gender metrics.**
- 5. Provide guidance, training and education to market participants on gender equality issues, including for senior board and executive positions and targeting female participants.**
- 6. Engage companies on their internal policies related to gender equality, promoting adoption of international best practice.**



## LEADING BY EXAMPLE:

- 1. Report gender equality metrics including, but not limited to those listed above.**
- 2. Support the development of women-owned small businesses ahead of future capital raising on a listed market.**
- 3. Introduce gender equality standards into exchange-offered investment products, and support gender-equality themed investment products.**
- 4. Develop policies on remuneration, gender representation, sexual harassment prevention, family leave and flexible work in order to support both women and men.**
- 5. Provide training and education to staff on gender equality issues, and provide mentorship opportunities for female staff through an internal women's network.**
- 6. Conduct or sponsor research on gender equality issues.**

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER ACTION

- The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) [Gender Equality Resource Repository](#)
- The [Women's Empowerment Principles](#)
- The Sustainable Stock Exchanges (SSE) initiative's [Investor Working Group](#)

## ABOUT THE SSE

Stock exchanges are uniquely positioned to influence their market in a way few other actors can. The Sustainable Stock Exchanges (SSE) initiative of the United Nations helps stock exchanges build on this position by connecting them with companies, investors and policymakers to support sustainable development in capital markets. Stock exchanges around the world are invited to join the initiative by signing a public commitment to promote sustainable business practices. It is organised by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Program Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), the United Nations Global Compact and the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI).

For more details visit [www.sseinitiative.org](http://www.sseinitiative.org).

This report was supported by [Emerging Market Sustainability Dialogues](#).

DOWNLOAD FULL REPORT

DOWNLOAD LIST OF WORKS CITED