



STANDARDS AND TECHNICAL REGULATIONS: A GENDER-BASED DISCUSSION

EIGHTH TRIENNIAL REVIEW

Submission from Canada

The following submission, dated 5 June 2018, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Canada.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Canada, as part of its overall priorities, is advancing a comprehensive feminist foreign policy. The objective is to apply a feminist lens across international policies and programs in trade, security, diplomacy and international assistance. The focus of this policy is to support women and girls as equal decision-makers, and to promote and protect their rights.

1.2. Applying a feminist lens is an effective way to ensure that gendered barriers are not perpetuated in policies and programs, and that conditions are created to achieve gender equality. To this end, Canada is undertaking gender based analysis plus (GBA+) on all of its new programs, policies and initiatives, including trade policies. GBA+ seeks to assess how diverse groups of women and men experience policies and helps in the identification and development of strategies to mitigate impacts and enhance positive effects. Canada has also adopted a "Progressive Trade Agenda" (PTA), with an emphasis on inclusion, including women's economic empowerment and gender equality.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1. Canada's Progressive Trade Agenda (PTA) reflects and promotes domestic and international policy priorities to support economic growth that benefits everyone and maintains confidence in an open, rules-based trading system. The PTA includes an informed and inclusive approach to trade policy-making; progressive content in trade agreements; and international engagement to advance support for progressive trade initiatives. For example, Canada is seeking to include a dedicated chapter on "Trade and Gender" in several of its ongoing FTA negotiations.

2.2. In terms of international engagement, at the WTO MC11 in December 2017, 118 WTO members and observers endorsed the Buenos Aires Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment, which seeks to remove barriers to, and foster, women's economic empowerment. There are now over 120 signatories to this Declaration. The Declaration was championed by the governments of Canada, Iceland and Sierra Leone, as well as the International Trade Centre. Canada is committed to sustaining the momentum behind the Joint Declaration and recently delivered (on 16 March 2018), the first workshop at the WTO on Trade and Gender Based Analysis under the Declaration.

2.3. Canada also wishes to bring to the attention of delegates the UNECE-led "Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative", under the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies with broad participation from governmental authorities, intergovernmental organizations, national, regional and international standards bodies, academia, civil society as well as partner UN organizations.

2.4. The goals of the UNECE initiative are:

- a. To challenge the perception that standards and technical regulations are "gender neutral".
- b. To enhance the contribution of standards in reaching Sustainable Development Goal 5 on "Empowering Women and Girls".

2.5. Concrete actions under the initiative include:

- a. promoting the participation of women in standard-setting and processes related to the development and implementation of technical regulations;
- b. developing and sharing best practices on how to take into account biological and cultural differences in standards development and implementation;
- c. developing gender indicators and criteria that can be used in standards development;
- d. identifying and undertaking actions to ensure that standards contribute to gender equality.

2.6. The initiative works on the basis of monthly or bi-monthly webinar meetings and yearly physical meetings and welcomes input from all WTO Member States. At the time of writing, UNECE as part of the initiative had developed a draft "Pledge" document that outlines action that standards bodies can take in order to make their activities more gender responsive.

3 PROPOSAL

3.1. In light of the above, Canada recommends that the Eighth Triennial Review include a workshop or thematic session on how gender plays, or can play a role in the development of standards and technical regulations. The objective of such a workshop or thematic session would be to encourage an exchange of experiences by governments and standards development organizations and to discuss ongoing work in this area.
