

Press release: Foreign Secretary and Lynn Forester de Rothschild co-chair discussion on gender equality in the economy

Universal female education and addressing gender inequalities in the workplace are crucial to strengthening economies, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has told business leaders at the Bloomberg Business Forum.

The Foreign Secretary and Lady Lynn Forester de Rothschild co-hosted a session that focussed on knocking down barriers to women in the private sector and how the public and private sector could work together to accelerate change. They also discussed the role of gender reporting and whether it would be possible to set a recognised universal standard of gender equality in private companies.

According to the World Economic Forum the gender gap has worsened globally over recent years and could take up to 170 years to eliminate it. However, in the UK the gender gap is at its lowest recorded level of 18.1%.

The Foreign Secretary said:

We all know that no society can achieve its full potential with half of its population left behind. If women were to make their full economic contribution, we could add as much as \$28 trillion to the world economy by 2025. But this cannot and will not happen unless all girls and women get equal opportunities in education and employment.

The evidence shows that gender parity in a company – particularly at senior level – is an excellent indicator of higher financial returns. There is no doubt of the moral and financial case for gender equality at home and abroad. The UK has taken important action to address the gender pay gap through legislation, and I want to continue working with the private sector to accelerate change.

By law, all UK companies with more than 250 employees must [publish their data on gender pay](#) by April 2018 – and every year thereafter. This level of transparency will create a powerful incentive for employers to demonstrate annual improvements, as gender parity is an indicator to investors and consumers that a company will likely outperform its competitors.

Our hosts, Bloomberg, have created a ground-breaking gender index for the financial services industry. I am eager to see more

innovations of this kind and for them to be used to develop a recognised gender equality standard around the world. The UK remains committed to working alongside top businesses in the private sector to make gender equality in the workplace a reality.

Lady Lynn Forester de Rothschild, Chief Executive Officer, E.L Rothschild said:

At the [Coalition for Inclusive Capitalism](#), we are seeing more global business and investment leaders focus on gender diversity as a driver of value. They believe that the diversity of thought provides a source of competitive advantage and innovative thinking that will help them better address the complex problems businesses face today.

But more work needs to be done. The business community needs to think more about the long-term value that is created when we invest in our workforce. To accelerate progress, more collaboration is needed across the public and private spheres to provide women and girls accessible career choice and advancement opportunities. Moreover, we need leaders to instill gender equality values in their organisational culture and measure and report on progress.

Roundtable attendees

- Co-Chair: Lady Lynn Forester de Rothschild, CEO, E.L Rothschild
- Moderator: Megan Murphy, Editor, Bloomberg Businessweek
- Simone Bagel-Trah, Chairwoman and Chair of the Supervisory Board and the Shareholders' Committee, Henkel Group
- Rana El Kaliouby, CEO and Co-founder, Affectiva
- Sarah Al Suhaimi, Chairwoman and CEO, Tadawul (Saudi Arabia Stock Exchange) and CEO, NCB Capital
- Kara Goldin, Founder and CEO, Hint, Inc.
- Peter Grauer, Chairman, Bloomberg LP and founding US Chair, 30 Percent Club
- Dr Shirley Jackson, President, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI)
- Eileen Murray, Co-President and Co-COO, Bridgewater Associates, LP

In [September 2015 MacKinsey Global Institute](#) reported that if women were to participate in the economy identically to men, it would add up to \$28 trillion, or 26%, to annual global GDP in 2025 compared with a business-as-usual scenario. This impact is roughly equivalent to the size of the combined US and Chinese economies today.

Britain was among the first countries to introduce gender pay gap legislation in April of this year. It is now the law that all UK companies with more than 250 employees must [publish their data on gender pay](#) and bonus gap data as well as the proportion of male and female employees in each salary quartile from April 2018 onwards, and every year afterwards.