

Promote Entrepreneurship of Women in Cities by Micro-Credit
by Ms Cai Sheng (China)

Dear President,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to attend the 2006 APEC 11th Women Leaders' Network Meeting held in Hanoi, Vietnam. I am from the All-China Women's Federation, the largest women organization in China with the aim at promoting the gender equality and mobilizing women to participate in China's all-round development. In this regarding, our priorities are to empower women and provide services for women, in particular, women in disadvantages. Now, I would like to share our experiences in promoting women's entrepreneurship in cities by delivering micro-credit in the two aspects:

1. Establish women employment or entrepreneurship center and help women to start their own business through micro-credit scheme

As we all know, China is famous with its largest population in the world. During the process of economic reform and restructuring in China women have more opportunities and face more challenges as well. In cities women face a great pressure in employment, in particular, women with low level of education and lack multiple skills have more difficulties in employment. To solve the problems, the governments have made a series of preferential policies to support women's self-employment, such as providing job guidance, tax reduction and exemption, providing social insurance, subsidies, free training and etc. At the same time, women's federations at various levels have tried every means to set up employment centers and raised fund through governments, international agencies and civil society to support women to start business on their own initiatives. They have delivered micro-credit to women through bank providing financial support for starting their own businesses. With the supportive policy, many micro and small enterprises owned by women have been established and developed soundly, as well as created jobs for women. For example, sponsored by UNDP and Tianjin Municipal government, Tianjin Municipal Women's Federation delivered the credit 9.8 million RMB Yuan to 2200 laid-off women workers from 2002 to 2004. Among them, 36 new entrepreneurs had not only been self-employed, but also provided the employment opportunities for more than 1800 women in their own enterprises. Among all the women who received the credit, the repayment rate is as high as 98%, and 97% of new employees had been shaken off poverty successfully.

Second, provide training, and enhance women's competitiveness in the market through improving their professional skills and management level

Practice proves that finance resource is not enough. In the initial stages of entrepreneurship, most of the women lack of professional knowledge and skills, therefore capacity building is more crucial for their career development. In this connection, local women's federations provide them relevant training courses to meet their needs. For instance, ACWF cooperated with Mary Kay and set up "Women Career Fund". In the past five years, 1.25 million revolving credits have been delivered to more than 3000 laid off women

workers for being self-reemployed in 10 big cities. Among them Tongzhou District Women's Federation of Beijing delivered credits to 50 of laid off women workers or rural poor women to raise black chicken. Afterwards, they invited expertise and animal husbandman to give training courses on professional and management knowledge and skills. In the production process, they also invited animal husbandman to visit households demonstrating practical skill for the women. Under the help of local women's federations, most of women have been successfully engaged in the black chicken raising and increased their incomes. Afterwards, more than 300 women in that area have followed them to raise black chicken and improved their living.

In addition, in the light of the actual situation, many local women's federations hold women entrepreneurship fora to advocate new concept, exchange information on marketing and technology. The fora provided the platform for women entrepreneurs to share experiences and show their products, and set models to women to inspire their confidences in entrepreneurship.

These are our practices of promoting entrepreneurship of women through micro-credit. I am very glad to have the chance to share with all of you. I believe that during the process of globalization, women in APEC region in joint efforts will continue to improve the competence, overcome the barriers and make our advantages to contribute more to the regional economic development.

Thank you for your attention.