

**United Nations Global Compact PRME x Global CSR Foundation
Igniting Women’s Innovation
Concept Note**

Relevance and Purpose

In 2015, the global community adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a target year of 2030. However, we have stalled or gone into reverse on some 37 percent of the global goals.¹ There is an urgent need to get the goals back on track or we risk irreparable harm to global progress.

Supporting this urgent agenda, young women are emerging as powerful drivers of innovation and solutions to global challenges. Yet, despite their motivation and impact potential, the vast majority of female-founded ventures struggle to survive and scale. Women are still markedly under-represented in global innovation systems: in 2023, only about 17.7 % of inventors named in international patent applications were women,² and gender parity in such innovation outputs is unlikely to be reached before the 2060s based on current trends. At the same time, only around one in four businesses worldwide is owned by a woman, and women make up roughly 38 % of sole proprietors,³ reflecting persistent gaps in both innovation participation and entrepreneurial support across economies. These disparities point to deep-seated structural barriers that limit how female innovators contribute to economic and SDG-driven solutions.

Building on the momentum of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 2026, [the UN Global Compact PRME](#), its higher education initiative, and the [Global CSR Foundation](#) are convening stakeholders to address the critical gaps in female-led innovation and entrepreneurship worldwide. To highlight this initiative, an in-person side-event entitled the **“Igniting Women’s Innovation”** will bring together representatives from governments, UN agencies, academia, civil society, and the private sector, alongside students and young women innovators.

The event will amplify the voices of women and girls driving innovation and emphasize the urgent need for more structured support systems, mentorship, and funding opportunities for female-led ventures.

The objective of the side-event is to showcase successful practices, facilitate dialogue, and foster collaboration towards actionable solutions that strengthen female participation in innovation ecosystems globally.

¹ UN (2023). SDGs: Progress Report. Accessible via <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/progress-chart/>

² WIPO (2024). Making innovation policy work for development. Accessible via: <https://www.wipo.int/publications/en/details.jsp?id=4724>

³ World Bank Entrepreneurship Database (2022).

Event Information

Date/Time: The session will take place on March 18th, 2026 at 3:00 pm until 4:15pm.

Location: UN Headquarters New York, Room E.

To attend the event in person, please register [here](#).