**Press Release**

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Attn: News Editor/ Chief Reporter/ Assignment Editor /Business Page-in-Charge:

**Gender-Responsive Public Procurement Urged at BUILD-ITC Policy Dialogue**

To increase women’s participation in government procurement in Bangladesh, the Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) of Bangladesh, Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD), and the International Trade Centre (ITC)’s SheTrades Initiative organized a virtual policy dialogue on "Gender-Responsive Public Procurement in Bangladesh: A New Methodology” on February 3, 2021. The dialogue took stock of the outcomes of previous dialogues and presented a newly developed methodology by ITC to create a gender-responsive roadmap for public procurement in Bangladesh.

Having welcomed the participants, Director (Joint Secretary) of CPTU Md. Aziz Taher Khan said that the presence of women tenderers in the meeting is a clear testimony in favor of developing a gender-responsive public procurement in Bangladesh.

The Government has made the Public Procurement Act, a new set of Public Procurement Rules and Citizen Portal EGP System to improve performance of public procurement with more transparency and ensuring fair treatment to all. We have seen that the presence of women in public procurement is not adequate, yet the discussion gives some indications about the way forwards for developing a gender-responsive public procurement in Bangladesh in coming days for enabling women-owned businesses (WOB) to access markets and working closely with both private and public sectors to develop tools and knowledge to prioritize gender equality in business opportunities, said the CPTU Director

Ferdaus Ara Begum, CEO, BUILD informed that governments spend USD 9 trillion on public procurement every year. This can account for approximately 10-15% of GDP in developed countries and up to 40% of GDP in developing countries. Women account for only 1% of public procurement opportunities worldwide. Participation of women entrepreneurs in the public procurement system is very insignificant in Bangladesh because of the knowledge and skills gap. To facilitate the Bangladeshi women entrepreneurs in the public procurement system in Bangladesh, she emphasized on the initiation of an effective Gender Responsive Public Procurement Road Map to accommodate the WEs in the existing system.

Belalur Rahman, Research Associate, BUILD in his presentation on “where we stand – Review of previous discussions to date, key outcomes, and action points identified” majorly highlighted present scenario of public procurement system, e-GP system, stands of the government on public procurement issue, private sector engagement and WEs’ engagement in the overall public procurement system in Bangladesh.

Anahita Vasudevan, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, ITC- She Trades Initiatives demonstrated a presentation on "How to re-shape public procurement for women entrepreneurs” which encompassed multi-dimensional public procurement issues in favor of women. She briefly described the step-by-step guide of reshaping public procurement which includes assess the situation, design a roadmap, make it happen and monitor the progress.

Judith Fessehaie, Program Manager Officer, ITC suggested that more emphasis should be put on initiation of the globally accepted definition of WE, access to finance, capacity building need and preferential provision to accommodate WEs in the public procurement system.

Dr. Nadia Bite Amin, President, WEND assured that initiation of preferential provision for WEs will definitely facilitate them in the overall system. Access to information as well as proper training will make the women more competitive in the system. Policy assistance to the WEs will also break the negative social mindset and encourage women to engage in public procurement.

Parveen S Huda, Manager, Capacity Building for Center for Peace and Justice at BRAC University mentioned that their project titled “Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities” supported by UN Women focuses on the increase of WEs in a way so that their association raises voice to get the implementation of their needs. Unity among the WEs will lead them to prosperity.

Khadija Bilkis informed that women’s participation in the overall system is very small:only 10 among 2000. General or social perception does not support WEs to engage in the public procurement system. A road map will be a useful tool to encourage the women entrepreneurs to enhance their participation.

Tanvir Ahmad, Country Coordinator of ITC SheTrades informed that all the participants are looking forward to the response of the ministries and policy makers to assist and guide ITC and BUILD to design the Gender Responsive Public Procurement Road Map. Such dialogues are key to include the voices of WEs regarding the barriers faced by them. Steps should be taken to strengthen access to finance for women entrepreneurs .

The planned Road Map will increase the participation of WEs in the public procurement management system. Knowledge based sessions and training on skill development to deal with public procurement and e-GP systems need to be formulated for the women entrepreneurs. Harmonized and synchronized networking among the WEs will assist them to get their voices heard by the policy makers, he added.

Sincerely

**Ferdaus Ara Begum**∣ CEO ∣ BUILD ∣ Mob: 01714102994∣ Email: ceo@buildbd.org∣www.buildbd.org