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LAUNCH OF CEO CHAMPIONS FOR WOMEN'S FORUM MEXICO 2016

Mexico City, 12 May, 2016 – Last April 27th, more than 50 CEOs, senior executives and gender diversity experts from the public and private sector, met behind closed doors for the first-ever CEO Champions meeting in Mexico as part of the Women's Forum Mexico.

"The intention of this meeting is to have your brains, your talents and your expertise, to create a platform where women can have more opportunities in Mexico," **Alejandro Cardoso**, President and CEO, Publicis Latin America told the CEOs of international as well as Mexican companies.

The active participation of CEOs focused on creating a platform discussion in order to find new and innovative ways to boost corporate development for women, with the aim of drafting a White Paper containing recommendations and conclusions, including the commitment of each CEO to act as generators of change

CEO Champions, an initiative of the Women's Forum for the Economy & Society, was created in 2010 as a global CEO-only group designed to drive progress and accountability for women's advancement within the private and public sector and to bring more men to the discussion table.

At the inaugural edition of CEO Champions, 23 CEOs, 13 of them men, were present and since then, CEO Champions events have taken place concurrently with Women's Forum meetings in Brazil, Deauville, Myanmar and most recently Dubai and now Mexico. **Each CEO Champions edition launched globally has further enriched the debate and forged actions** still being developed today.

Change can come from many different angles, but with the launch of CEO Champions in Mexico, the CEOs are taking it upon themselves to enact policies and strategies designed to enrich their companies with the presence of ambitious and qualified women vying for a chance to reach their professional goals. *"This is a real eye-opening initiative for Mexico, and very learning focused. It became clear that unconscious biases and stereotyping are the two major roadblocks in terms of women's advancement within companies. Also, no quotas and no more 'safe' environments – mentors and role models – that's what women need in the workplace"* explained **Sandra Sanchez**, CEO of Probiomed

This first meeting will result in the publication of a White Paper listing all of the commitments and best practices agreed upon by each CEO present, further opening the debate in the region and beyond, creating accountability in the corporate world in order to help close the gender gap. Once the White Paper is published within a month's time, **the CEO Champions Members have agreed to meet several times a year and track each other's progress** in implementing the strategies and best practices they have committed to, within their companies.

Among some of the key highlights and takeaways, to be published in the CEO Champions Mexico White Paper and to be used as a guiding tool for CEOs and their organizations, the members of CEO Champions Mexico have agreed that they need:

- To make cultural and mind-set-changing a priority, meaning holding town hall meetings, communicating

from the top down, having concrete discussions about how and what needs to change.

- To re-visit and evaluate current family policy programs and ask what's working and what's not and how can these programs (if they exist) be flexible and keep meeting the continued role of the family.
- To establish mentoring programs that don't have to be the same sex. There many different mind-sets in the region that need to change and there is a clear need for role models.
- To develop the use of role-models and mentoring as well as reverse-mentoring. Programs need to be implemented in each organization allowing this to happen.
- To measure the revenue accrued due to women coming back after maternity leave, as well as the revenue lost when they don't.

*"At AXA last year, 92% of the women who took maternity leave came back. This needs to be measured, because it's so hard to find the right qualified people to do the job, the CEO of AXA Mexico and Latin America **Xavier de Bellefon** said. If we don't help them come back, we lose a lot of money and if that's not enough to build a business case, then I don't know what is."*

The outcome of the CEO Champions initiative for Women's Forum Mexico seeks to help enrich the national conversation about the need to implement change in Mexico and to diversify corporations and promote the Mexican economy. *"We need to be champions of this issue and take it to colleagues who don't see it. We need to be opinion leaders"* **de Bellefon** added.



CEO Champions Mexico 2016

Mexico is the country with the lowest female representation in senior management positions in Latin America, regardless of the one million qualified women in the country who are willing, eager and available for incorporation into the workforce. (McKinsey & Company "Power of Parity"). There is a great discrepancy between the desire of these women and the system in place allowing them to succeed. If the immense gender gap felt in this region could be closed, up to \$800K million could be added to Mexico's annual GDP in 2025, according to McKinsey & Company. There is a need for change in the workforce and this CEO Champions Mexico initiative is one of the many first steps to be taken for this to happen.



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The CEO Champions Members Mexico spoke of how to create gender diversity strategies and an environment in which women can prepare and develop further in each company. They also stressed the importance of taking action to bring the situation of women to the next level.

"We must not only respect women as women, but we need to also value their differences, because with the presence of women, we can get to a place where I cannot get to alone," said **Felix Scott**, CEO of Sanofi Mexico, and partner of CEO Champions Mexico.

The challenges to overcome in a country like Mexico are to clearly identify the needs of women that are relevant to them without challenging the nature of their gender. Their talents need to be used at different stages of their lives to actively promote diversity and create role models as references to generate greater confidence. These are some of the key elements according to the CEO Champions Members, detected to generate better performance of the female labor force.

"This 'venue' enables to talk about the issues that are really going on within our companies. One of the most important – that a women's agenda should not be about gender equality, it should be about performance," explained **Gayle Schueller**, General Director of 3M Mexico.

Monica Flores Barragan, Managing Regional Director, Latin America, Manpower Group, insisted however, that *"women need to do something...women need to exercise their business muscles and become co-responsible for their careers and professional development."*

This CEO Champions meeting is a first step in many needed to be taken to generate change. Opening up the discussion in a region whose culture evades such topics is already a step forward. **Alejandro Cardoso** called out for more communication around these issues - *"We need 80 million Mexicans to hear what we are talking about."* Let's hope this becomes a reality sooner rather than later.

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About Women's Forum Mexico

Women's Forum Mexico 2016, produced by the Paris-based Women's Forum for the Economy & Society, brought together more than 800 visionary women and men from North and Latin America, Europe and the Caribbean, from both the public and private sectors and from all major fields of endeavor. Building on the theme "co-creando junt@s/co-creating together", delegates discussed women's economic empowerment and the necessity to involve everyone in the process of creating new collaborative social and economic opportunities. Along with CEO Champions, other important Women's Forum initiatives on the program during Women's Mexico include **Rising Talents**, **Amazing Women** and a **Cuban Delegation** of women entrepreneurs.

About The Women's Forum for the Economy & Society, a Publicis Groupe company

Since 2005 the Women's Forum for the Economy & Society has been the world's leading platform featuring women's views and voices on major social and economic issues. Deploying the experience of both women and men – business leaders, researchers, politicians, entrepreneurs... – across all generations and geographies, our

<http://www.womens-forum.com/initiatives/ceo-champions>



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conferences feature broad, rich and edgy debates, acting as a sounding board for today's important ideas and a springboard for tomorrow's solutions. The practical discussions in our Discovery sessions typically focus not only on overcoming barriers but on creating new opportunities. The Women's Forum also promotes the advancement of women through regional and international networks. In addition to the annual Women's Forum Global Meeting in Deauville, France, important Women's Forum meetings have taken place in Brazil, Myanmar, Italy, Brussels and Dubai. The first-ever Women's Forum Mauritius takes place 20-21 June 2016 in the Republic of Mauritius. And the 12th edition of the Women's Forum Global Meeting will take place 30 November-2 December 2016 in Deauville.

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