A cloak of invisibility is obscuring the contribution women make to global economic governance. This reality moved international trade official Arancha González so much that she invited 28 women from “all walks of life” around to world, including Prime Minister Mia Mottley, to contribute to the new book Women Shaping Global Economic Governance.

But for González, who is executive director of the International Trade Centre (ITC), a joint agency of the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations, the issue is less about men and women and more about diversity.

Ahead of a visit to Barbados this week, the Spanish economist told BARBADOS BUSINESS AUTHORITY, “I think women are still too invisible in the world economy. It’s not that they are not there but they are not seen as being there.”

“This is what triggered a decision on my side to invite 28 women from different walks of life, from north south east and west with different perspectives, some older, some more mature, some younger, some known, some less known, to write a book with their contributions, but a book that is not about women, it’s a book by women.”

Speaking in an interview from Geneva, Switzerland, González said it was important “that we make more visible the contribution that women can make not just to economic growth, not just to employment, but also to thinking about economic governance issues”.

“That’s what motivated this publication that tried to contribute to making women more visible in the economy and I am very glad to have a great contribution from Prime Minister Mia Mottley. It so happens that there was also a contribution from Christine Lagarde who will now become the president of the European Central Bank,” she added.

“It goes to show that there is still a way to go in making the contribution of women to global economic governance issues more visible and therefore render them actors on equal footing to men in managing economies.”

Framing her position from the standpoint of diversity, González said: “We know that diversity brings value, we know for example that companies that are more diverse in their leadership team are more profitable, we know that economies that include more women as economic actors grow more.

“So it’s a question of making this diversity as being a contribution to wealth clearer and also making it clearer in terms of economic thinking and making those contributions more visible. And it strikes me that we still are in a space, central bankers, trade policies, investment policies, climate change management, where a lot of the contributions that are visible are contributions from men.

The ITC official acknowledged progress with diversity as it related to women getting more of the credit they warranted. However, she said there was still a long way to go.

“I see progress but I also see huge challenges. I see progress in for example the European Commission announcing that it will have equal number of male and female commissioners. This is huge progress, 20 years ago there was just two women around the table, today it’s equal,” she noted.

“I think that this is where a lot of the contributions of the women that are visible are contributions from men. I am very glad to have a great diversity of women members, women from ‘all walks of life’ around the world, from north south east and west with different perspectives, some older, some more mature, some younger, some known, some less known, to write a book with their contributions, but a book that is not about women, it’s a book by women.”

On Thursday at the Errol Barrow Centre for Creative Imagination the the University of the West Indies, Shridath Ramphal Centre (SRC) and ITC will hold a discussion titled An Evening Chat with Women Shaping Economic Governance and Trade. González will be part of a panel discussion and she is scheduled to be joined by Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Trade Sandra Husbands and director of CARICOM’s Office of Trade Negotiations Gail Mathurin. The moderator is the SRC’s deputy director of the Dr. Jan Yves Remy.