



## **Item 6: Interventions**

### **Ending violence against women and girls: Lessons from the region**

**UNECE Regional Review Meeting  
29 October 2019**

Good afternoon everyone.

My name is Mohinder Watson and I represent the International Council for Women and was the lead for the CSO Working Group on Violence Against Women.

Thank you for this important opportunity to present civil society's recommendations on violence against women and girls, a phenomenon that will affect one in three women over their lifetime, yet we know that only 13% of incidents of VAWG are reported in the UNECE region and there are very few convictions.

#### **Our civil society recommendations to governments are:**

Firstly we urge states to improve access to justice for those who have suffered VAWG and GBV.

- We must stop the impunity of perpetrators, rehabilitate them where possible and engage all men and boys in changing stereotypes such as through the White Ribbon campaign.
- We need faster investigations, prosecutions and redress for survivors through more specialised courts as well as better coordinated services including immediate interventions such as emergency restraining orders to protect survivors.
- We recommend the strengthening laws on VAWG including the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention and the new ILO Convention 190 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work as well as the enforcement of existing laws on VAWG to ensure equality and

non-discrimination under the law in accordance with international human rights standards.

Secondly we recommend states establish comprehensive National Action Plans on VAWG based on gender equality, mainstreaming and budgeting. Such plans should include:

- Adequate and sustainable funding for services for survivors – including women’s shelters, free legal aid, psychological support, medical care and child protection and support to integrate them back into society.
- Well-coordinated multi-sectoral teams of well-trained police, judiciary, health, social workers, child protection officers, etc.
- Integrated and reliable data collection on all forms of VAWG including emerging forms with the assurance of confidentiality. This data collection must extend beyond the current age limit of 49 for older women.
- Accountability through systematic monitoring and independent evaluation to ensure services are functioning efficiently to meet survivors’ needs.
- Recognition of the intersectionality of race, socio-economic status, religion, gender identity which particularly affect groups such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, widows, older women, migrants and other vulnerable groups.

Thirdly we recommend a focus on the prevention of VAWG through education and awareness. This includes educating pre-kindergarten children through secondary school students on internet safety, human rights, mutual respect and tolerance. Educate adolescents about consent, sexuality and healthy relationships.

Finally we encourage governments to work more closely with civil society organisations and feminist groups to mobilise women at the grassroots level as we can achieve much more when we work together.

Thank you.

## INTERVENTION 2

Thank you and good afternoon,

My name is Rashima Kwatra, and I work for RFSL- the Swedish Federation for LGBTIQ Rights, today I'm speaking on behalf of a wide range of organizations who are part of the Women's Major Group.

While progress to tackle gender based violence has been made, gross human rights violations and violence against all women and gender non conforming people persist and exist in every country in the UNECE region.

Women and people who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as migrants, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming women and people, women with disabilities, older women, sex workers, people who have been trafficked and other victims of sexual and economic exploitation, women of color, women living with HIV, indigenous and Roma women, women human rights defenders, and women with other marginal statuses, face increased levels of violence and harassment.

These violations include killings, violent attacks, torture, arbitrary detention, so called "corrective rape", conversion therapy, hate crimes, honor killings, forced marriage, infanticide, and family or domestic partner violence, and harassment by state authorities.

Discrimination and violence are compounded by the existence of laws that directly or indirectly criminalize women and limit their agency, right to bodily integrity, and to live a life free from violence or even torture.

The response to these violations is often inadequate, underreported, and rarely properly investigated and prosecuted, leading to widespread impunity, and lack of justice, remedies, and support for victims.

Experiences of violence negatively impact livelihood, human capital, economic participation, and ultimately perpetuates a cycle of poverty. Socially constructed gender roles, norms and stereotypes, perpetuate stigma lead to further exclusion and oppression.

The Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda agree that violence and discrimination, stigma, and the social and economic exclusion of any person,

community, and group must end. We call on governments to prioritize and address the marginalization, vulnerabilities, and discrimination of women in all of our diversity by actively engaging civil society and communities affected in the response to violence and by adopting and implementing the Istanbul Convention.

Thank you

## INTERVENTION 3

Thank you chair.

My name is Marianna Leite, and I work for Christian Aid UK, today I'm speaking on behalf of Women's Major Group. We applaud member states efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and the progress that has been achieved over the past 25 years. However, we echo the panelists concerns on the pushbacks against gender equality, human rights and democracy and we fear this pushback is fomenting a rise of all forms of violence against women and girls, from domestic level violence to structural violence such as those perpetrated by our current economic system, anti-rights groups and patriarchy.

Anti-rights groups purposefully erode the canon of established international human rights treaties and conventions, dismantle democratic structures, push for anti-humanistic values and even de-legitimise UN agencies and human rights bodies. This has resulted in an increase of systematic attacks on human rights, in general, and women's and marginalized groups' rights in particular<sup>1</sup>. Human rights defenders have been profiled, threatened and at times killed as a result of that. Anti-rights fundamentalist are well resourced and globally well connected and are often linked to ultra-conservative faith based organisations<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See the E.U. Fundamental Rights Agency report (2017): "[Challenges to women's human rights in the EU](#)"; and EU Parliament's resolution (2019) based in the report) on "[Backlash in Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Rights](#)".

<sup>2</sup> There is evidence about the large and global connections among the anti-rights movements as well as to the international harsh capitalist political economy and to other movements that are benefiting from it such as the climate change deniers. See for example Open Democracy, 27 March 2019,

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/revealed-trump-linked-us-christian-fundamentalists-pour-millions-of-dark-money-into-europe-boosting-the-far-right/>; Open Democracy, 27 March 2019, Revealed: dozens of European politicians linked to US 'incubator for extremism', <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/revealed-dozens-of-european-politicians-linked-to-us-incubator-for-extremism/>

**We believe this issue needs to be tackled as a matter of priority. We therefore recommend the following:**

- We call all governments to renew their gender equality commitments and to reaffirm the principle of non-regression requiring that international norms which have already been adopted by States cannot be revised and to map and report anti-rights organisations pushing against democratic institutions and human rights policies and narratives, developing strategies that hold them to account, increasing accountability and transparency of all of those that are responsible for discriminatory practices that violate international human rights law.
- We urge all states, UN agencies and other stakeholders to suspend and/or push for the suspension of the financial restriction to the full implementation of women's rights; to increase funding for the women's movements and women's rights platforms and projects, especially those focusing on advocacy on the pushbacks which build alliances with progressive faith-based actors, policy-makers/politicians, mass media and other stakeholders.

Thank you.