



Geneva

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Statements on behalf of the EU

UNECE Beijing+25 Review Conference - Item 4. Key Trends on Gender Equality across ECE Region

Thank you, Mme. Moderator,

I speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

We would like to thank the panelists for their important contributions.

We welcome this regional review meeting for UNECE MS in preparation for the global Beijing+25 review in 2020 marking the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Gender equality is one of the fundamental values of the European Union. The European Union supports a human rights-based approach, to prevent and tackle the consequences of gender inequalities in both internal and external actions.

The Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality and the Gender Action Plan (Strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action) are the main cornerstones of the EU policy on gender equality both internally and externally. On this basis, the EU pursues a three-pronged approach, combining political and policy dialogues with partner countries, gender mainstreaming and targeted actions. These initiatives focus on concrete actions towards ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity, promoting the economic and social rights of all women and girls and strengthening their voice and participation.

Nonetheless, while progress has been made, many of the challenges identified in 1995 are still relevant today, new ones are emerging and objectives set for gender equality have not been fully realised.

As the Commission on the Status of Women has stressed in its 63rd agreed conclusions, social protection, public services and access to sustainable infrastructure are necessary to realising gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and that in their absence, significant hurdles, including violence, prevent women from reaching equality with men and fully enjoying their human rights. Today, more women participate in the labour market, but more still remains to be done in order to achieve gender parity.. The gender pay gap - EU average - remains at 16%, while the gender pension gap is 36%. One of the reasons for these gaps is the unequal sharing of care responsibilities in the private life, over time leading to a motherhood penalty. The recently adopted Work-Life Balance Directive aims at encouraging

uptake of family leaves by both parents an equal footing.

Recent data confirms that one in three women have experienced violence. We must create an enabling environment for women and girls that includes life free from violence and discrimination. However, gender equality is not just a women's issue, it concerns men too. The role of men and boys is very important in promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women and girls, the worst obstacle to their equal participation in all spheres of life.

Online violence and harmful online behaviour against women is an increasing area of concern. Digitalisation can contribute to empowering for women and girls, allowing their voices to be heard on online platforms. However, cyber violence against women has a silencing effect and infringes their right to privacy, to freedom of expression, and to full participation in economic, social, cultural and political affairs. While artificial intelligence seems to be neutral, caution should be paid to ensure that they do not introduce gender stereotypes and other related biases.

As intersecting forms of discriminations against women persist today, in particular relating to women's health, including sexual and reproductive health, the EU would like to reaffirm that it stays committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence.

Last June, here in Geneva, the Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work was adopted. This marks a historic moment in the protection of the right to decent work, emphasising the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

We look forward to discussing these issues with you over the next days.

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