



**Statement on behalf of the
European Union and its Member States**

**At the
UNECE
Beijing + 20 Regional Review Meeting
Geneva, 6-7 November 2014**

Preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls

Item 7

Geneva, 7th November 2014

Item 7: Preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls
Position of the European Union and its Member States

Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The following countries align themselves with this declaration¹: Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia.

Violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights and is certainly the most brutal manifestation of discrimination. Neither custom, tradition, culture, privacy, religion nor so-called honour can be invoked to justify it or to avoid state obligations with respect to its prevention and elimination and the prosecution of perpetrators. Domestic violence is the most frequent form of violence affecting women and girls. Female genital mutilation is both a violation of human rights and a form of child abuse, and child early and forced marriage, is a violation of human rights that robs girls of their education, health and long term prospects.

The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls was the focus of the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women: the EU reaffirms its commitment to fully implement the conclusions agreed in that session, and stands ready to assist in their implementation. There is no possibility of building a just and equal society, or to have sustainable development if women continue to be victims of violence just because they are women: this must be taken into account in the preparation of the post-2015 agenda. Violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights that has short and long-term adverse consequences on their health, including their sexual and reproductive health. We therefore commit ourselves to the roll-out of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Action Plan as agreed in WHA 67.15.

This panel discussion provides us with an opportunity to discuss a systematic, comprehensive, multi-sectoral and sustained approach to address all forms of violence against and trafficking of

¹ Turkey is a Candidate country; the Candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process; Candidate Country Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

women and girls. It also provides us with the opportunity to exchange good practices and learn from each other.

In Europe, one in three women has experienced some form of physical and/or sexual assault at least once from the age of 15: this is one of the striking results of a recent EU-wide survey conducted by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency. The fight against all forms of violence against women and girls is a top priority for the EU both at internal and external level. There are several activities which we would like to share:

At internal level:

- “Dignity, integrity and the end of gender based violence” is one of the six priority areas of action in the European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015), and the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020) urges EU Member States to combat all forms of violence against women to ensure the full enjoyment by women of their human rights and to achieve gender equality.
- the EU recently adopted new legislation to strengthen the rights and protection for all victims of crime, including women victims of violence, establishing minimum standards across all EU Member States, as well as European protection orders, which ensure that women who have suffered domestic violence are protected from the perpetrators if they travel or move anywhere in the EU.
- We also finance awareness raising activities, exchanges of good practice and research, as well as the work of grass-roots organisations which play a crucial role in the daily fight against violence against women and girls.
- Our efforts also address better monitoring of this phenomenon by using common indicators: the European Institute for Gender Equality publishes topical [monitoring reports](#) in the context of the EU-follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action although comparability of data among the EU Member States still remains a concern.

At external level:

- the fight against all forms of violence against women is one of the objectives in our Plan of Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in development cooperation and the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human rights and Democracy.
- The EU Guidelines to end Violence and Discrimination against women and girls, adopted in 2008, guide the EU in its external action and development cooperation and in its defence of human rights. The guidelines focus on three interrelated aims: preventing

violence, protecting and supporting victims and prosecuting perpetrators. In addition the EU has prioritised gender equality issues in 116 human rights country strategies, which identify the priority human rights issues on which the EU will take action in every country in which it is represented.

In conclusion all states must actively pursue comprehensive strategies and policies to prevent violence against women and girls, to protect and support the victims and to investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators. States must at all levels, use all appropriate means to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, and must prevent, protect, investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls and end impunity. Neither custom, tradition, culture, privacy, religion nor so-called honour, can be invoked to justify it or to avoid state obligations with respect to its prevention and elimination and the prosecution of perpetrators. In addition, specific actions are required to combat trafficking of women and girls and domestic violence, including marital rape, and to protect the rights of the girl child: female genital mutilation is a violation of women's and children's human rights and a form of child abuse and child early and forced marriage is a violation of human rights that robs girls of their education, health and long-term prospects. We must also recognise that acts of gendered violence against women and girls increasingly occur online and through social media, and states should work together to combat these new methods of violence. Furthermore, the involvement of men in eradicating violence against women and girls and support for grassroots organisations and awareness campaigns, are key to achieving changes in social attitudes, by which women and girls are regarded as subordinate to men and boys or as having stereotyped roles that perpetuate practices involving violence or coercion. Finally, the systematic collection of statistical and administrative data are needed to ensure monitoring and accountability.

Thank you chair.

Question to the panellists:

The education of parents and of boys and girls in schools to encourage non-violent attitudes and caring masculinities are crucial in order to prevent violence against women: How to effectively improve these actions?