



EUROPEAN UNION  
Permanent Delegation to the United Nations Office  
and other international organisations in Geneva

Geneva, 7 November 2014  
EC/DEV/ENV/SvT/IN 2014/120

**UNECE, Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting,**  
**6-7 November 2014**  
**EU-MS Key messages (as delivered)**

**On item 4: Long term trends in gender equality and the empowerment of women in the ECE Region**

Thank you, Chair. We will deliver broader statements to the Secretariat for inclusion on the web-site. Key messages from the European Union and its Member States are:

First, we made progress in the last 20 years: more women are in employment than 20 years ago and women and girls outperform men and boys in education.

Second, that does not mean we can sit back. On the contrary we must continue to adopt pro-active measures and strategies because there is not yet full gender equality in employment, women are overrepresented in part time work which is more precarious and has limited career opportunities, and these two factors result in the continuation of pay and pension gaps, with women on average having 40% lower pensions.

Third, so what do we need to do? We must:

- continue labour activation measures that target women, in particular in times of crisis, so that we can get more women into jobs, where possible full time and decision making jobs;
- create adequate care infrastructures and services, otherwise women will not move into jobs;
- address the problem of gender segregation in subject choices. Our society gets more technological and if we do not get more girls into STEM<sup>[1]</sup> subjects, we will create the future gender employment gap;
- continue to make clear that full gender equality not only is a human rights necessity but also an economic necessity and plain common sense;
- more successfully engage men in equally sharing family and work responsibilities. We talk a lot about it but seem to be delivering very little.

Thank you Chair

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<sup>[1]</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

### **On Item 5: Closing gender gaps**

Thank you, Chair. Key messages from the European Union and its Member States are:

First, as outlined under panel 4, we have made progress in the last 20 years, but we still have important gender gaps in education (girls are underrepresented in STEM subjects) and in employment (no full gender equality, overrepresentation in part-time jobs, underrepresentation in decision making jobs) resulting in pay and pension gaps.

Second, a key problem is that due to persisting stereotypes on traditional gender roles, women still carry a disproportionate share of the burden of household work and of caring for children, the elderly and other dependants.

Third, so what do we need to do? We must:

- increase women's labour market participation, because it is a question of empowerment and economic independence, and it is good economics.
- raise awareness, tackle gender stereotypes, change social norms and practices and empower women to make non-traditional choices and to climb the decision-making ladder;
- support women and men to reconcile work and family life and for that we must provide:
  - more affordable and higher quality childcare services,
  - clear opportunities for maternal and parental leave,
  - flexible work arrangements,
  - equal career opportunities.
  - investments in the provision of care and support services are an absolute priority to allow a more equal sharing of household, family and care responsibilities between women and men.

Thank you Chair

### **On Item 6: Women's representation and leadership in policy and decision-making**

Thank you, Chair. Key messages from the European Union and its Member States are:

First the numbers are not good. Less than 30% of women in national parliaments and governments and less than 20% in corporate boardrooms is not the critical mass required to bring about change.

Second, we must actively help increase the number of women in leadership positions and we have a menu of possible measures at our disposal including:

- gender balance targets and quotas: we heard that binding quota were very successful in Belgium;
- female role models: we heard this was very successful in Finland;
- incentives to attract women to management positions,
- voluntary business led initiatives,
- transparent evaluation and promotion systems,
- and support to networking and mentoring programs and grass roots organisations.
- Education: we heard the change of perception of a "cool man" in Norway;
- Care services that allow to reconcile work and family life;

Third, these measures should not be taken in an isolated way, but states should design and implement strategic plans to achieve gender parity and strategic means: a package of measures, targets and timelines.

Thank you Chair

### **On Item 7: Preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls**

Thank you, Chair. Key messages from the European Union and its Member States are:.

Two broad messages:

- First, it must be crystal clear, and it must be made crystal clear in all our communication that nobody can ever rely on custom, tradition, culture, privacy, religion or so-called "honour" to justify violence against women and girls or to avoid state obligations to prevent and eliminate it and to prosecute the perpetrators.
- Second, all States must pursue comprehensive strategies and policies at all levels, and use all appropriate means, not only to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, but in particular to prevent violence against women and girls, to protect and support the victims and to investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls and end impunity

Three more specific messages:

- First, 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 are fully committed to the role-out of the ICDP Action Plan as agreed in WHA 67.15 and want other to do the same.
- Second, specific actions are required to combat trafficking of women and girls, to eradicate 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, they cannot be justified on cultural grounds.

- Third, we must stay ahead of the curve and recognise that acts of gendered violence against women and girls increasingly occur online and through social media, and that states should work together to combat these new methods of violence.

And two broader messages again:

- 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, social attitudes that regard women and girls as subordinate to men and boys or as having stereotyped roles that perpetuate violent or coercive practices.
- Finally, the systematic collection of statistical and administrative data are needed to ensure monitoring and accountability. We are grateful to the UNECE Statistical division for the background paper which shows we have a lot of data on gender equality but not on violence. We need that because the more transparent the more we will act. We call on the UNECE and other actors to fill this information gap.

Thank you Chair

### **On Item 8: Governance and gender justice**

Thank you, Chair. Key messages from the European Union and its Member States are very straightforward.

- First, rights to gender equality and non-discrimination must be provided for in enforceable legislation that is fully implemented and monitored by states, which have a responsibility to take action to prevent and condemn discrimination in all its forms.
- Second, victims of discrimination must have easy and effective access to legal remedies and to the justice system as well as to related support services.
- Third, the effectiveness of the institutional mechanisms must be measurable by means of clear indicators.
- Fourth, an important lesson learned since Beijing, 20 years ago, is that legislation is needed not only to eliminate gender inequality but also to promote gender equality in all aspects of life.
- Finally, strong a legislative framework is a pre-condition for gender equality but it is not enough.

Thank you Chair

## **On Item 9: The way forward**

Thank you, Chair. Key messages from the European Union and its Member States are:

- The Post 2015 Framework should ensure a rights-based approach encompassing all human rights. It should also address justice, equality and equity, good governance, democracy and the rule of law, with a strong focus on the empowerment and rights of women and girls and gender equality, including as a stand-alone goal, and on preventing and combating violence against women and girls as essential preconditions for equitable and inclusive sustainable development, as well as important values and objectives in themselves.
- We remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences and in this context sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Achieving gender equality is not possible without the participation of men and boys as agents of change. We must educate and raise awareness of men and boys on how to prevent gender stereotypes, discrimination and violence against women and girls. There are many men who want to play their part and strategies must be designed on how best to engage men as active partners for achieving gender equality.
- The EU has taken strong commitments to make UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and all relevant related resolutions a reality and in particular to end impunity for any acts of sexual violence in conflict.

Thank you, Chair

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