

Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Estonia.

**Item 7 – Preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls**

Chairperson,

Estonia would like to align itself with the statements made by the European Union.

Estonia actively pursues policies to prevent violence against women and girls, and to protect and support the victims. We strongly believe it is the duty of every state to make determined and comprehensive efforts to eliminate gender based violence and to punish the perpetrators.

One activity underway in Estonia for this purpose is the Ministry of Social Affairs programme on gender-based violence for the period 2012-2016 which improves the services for victims of domestic violence by strengthening cooperation between institutions and raising awareness among victims and the general public. It also focuses on the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation including research on victims needs training of relevant specialists and improving the rehabilitation and shelter services.

Furthermore, the need to tackle sexual violence has been brought to policy focus in Estonia. In 2014 the first conference on sexual assault took place in Estonia, involving law enforcement officials, social workers, counsellors and international experts. In addition, National Development Plan for Reducing Violence for the period 2015-2020 includes actions against sexual violence, both for prevention and for dealing with the consequences. Pilot projects targeting victims of such violence and/or perpetrators are already running.

Grass-root organisations are active partners to the state in implementing these field-shifting actions.

It is of vital importance to involve men in eradicating violence against women and girls. The project “Bringing up a violence free generation”, financed from the EU Progress Programme, involves famous Estonian men in a media campaign that aims to change attitudes towards violence against women and girls. Among the activities are also trainings for boys as well as girls. In 2013 Estonian Women’s Roundtables Union together with the Ministry of Social Affairs initiated campaign titled “Men against violence”, involving male politicians, actors,

musicians etc. expressing support to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Finally, Estonia continues addressing the root causes of violence against women such as gender inequality, discrimination, and gender stereotyping. We are committed to put an end to this serious violation of women's human rights.