

UNECE Beijing Regional Review Meeting, 29-30 October 2019

**Key messages from sessions 4,6,7,10 to be
reported in session 12 (17:00 – 18:00) by
the co-chair Ms. Pascale Baeriswyl**

Key trends for Gender Equality across the UNECE region (Item 4)

- Progress has been achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action but no country has fully achieved gender equality. UNECE member States have prioritized work in three main areas: combating violence against women, women's economic empowerment and political participation.
- **Violence against women and girls remains a significant challenge for all countries and all segments of society.** The Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) has constituted a substantial driver of national efforts. Those member States who have not yet ratified it are encouraged to do so. The focus of most national efforts remained on intimate partner and domestic violence and human trafficking. The emerging challenge of online forms of violence requires a comprehensive

response involving interventions across the educational, criminal justice and ICT sectors.

- **Significant efforts were made to support women's inclusion into the workforce through the reconciliation of work and private life, addressing the gender pay gap and proactive labour market policies.** Work-life balance was targeted by many countries as a critical means of removing barriers to women's workforce participation. Despite the progress, important gaps in policies and their effective implementation continue to impede progress. Women continue to experience lower employment rates, shorter working hours, higher absence rates and lower pay and capital income than men. Gender has not been effectively mainstreamed into national economic policies. While many countries acknowledged the gender pay gap, few have taken concrete measures to reduce it. The Equal Pay International Coalition is also an important multi-stakeholders initiative and a substantial driver of national efforts towards women's economic empowerment.
- **Progress in women's political participation across the region remains uneven, and particularly low at the**

local level. Only a few countries are close to parity in women's political participation at the national level, and numerous others have applied or are initiating the application of quotas. A few countries experienced setbacks, reflecting the absence of effective mechanisms to ensure women's equal political participation, such as temporary special measures.

- **The significant need for sufficient financing for gender equality was reiterated by panellists and participants as one of the biggest barriers to advancing gender equality.** The lack of sufficient financial and human resources render national and local gender equality machinery weak and marginalized. The under-financing of CSOs has a deleterious effect on the quality and scope of service provisions for victims/survivors, including inadequate shelter space.
- **The process towards Gender Equality has to be inclusive in order to address multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination and to leave no one behind.** Panelists and participants drew attention to diverse groups, including: migrant women, LGBTI women, women with disabilities, sex workers, ethnic and racial

minorities, single mothers and elderly women, among others. Greater inclusion requires greater outreach, cooperation and dialogue, including inter-generational dialogue.

Ending Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons and Solutions from the region (Item 6)

- **It is important to emphasize the Istanbul Convention (IC) as a driver of national-level progress in combating violence against women. Greater links should be made between the IC and CEDAW and its General Recommendation No. 35, the new ILO Convention 190 and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, to guide national actors in implementing their international commitments.** All member States are encouraged to sign and ratify the new ILO Convention which addresses gender-based violence in the workplace. These international instruments not only guide legislative change, but also lead to changes in practice. Despite normative advances, implementation of the conventions across the region remains weak, and States are not guaranteeing their due diligence obligations.

- **Insufficient data collection, disaggregated by sex, gender and other characteristics, constitutes a significant barrier to evidence-based policy-making. Increased resources, capacity building and political will are necessary for strengthening data collection, analysis, dissemination and use.** Few countries disaggregate data by all of the relevant factors. The forthcoming UN World Data Forum, taking place next October in Switzerland will address this issue. There are also concerns regarding the confidentiality of the data and protection standards. Therefore comparable data within different national-level stakeholders is needed. Sufficiently resourced data collecting and monitoring institutions have to be set up and national coordination between the different monitoring bodies has to be guaranteed.
- **There remains a significant need for coordinated multi-sectoral service provisions for victims/survivors, including specialized services for vulnerable groups who experience multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination.** Panellists and participants emphasized the need to consult with and listen to victims/survivors prior to setting up systems to provide services. It is also essential that

participating CSO service providers receive national budgetary allocations sufficient to sustain their work on a permanent basis. Multi-sectoral coordination must occur at both the national and sub-national levels.

Education for Gender Equality: A Powerful tool for Transformation (Item 7)

- **There is a need to adopt comprehensive and equitable legal, policy and planning frameworks to prevent gender discrimination and to dismantle barriers to education and lifelong learning.** It should be assessed to which extent gender equality is mainstreamed in national education policies, legal frameworks, plans and education interventions. Improving disaggregated data for education sector analysis, planning, budgeting and monitoring information systems is needed to address context-specific barriers that impede gender equality through education. All children should benefit from free and compulsory education.
- **We need to increase the quality of education to better prepare for life as well as for school to work transition.** Throughout the development of curriculums and learning materials as well as in the training of

teachers, we need to apply innovation, ICT education and entrepreneurship and provide the skills needed to address gender stereotypes and promote global citizenship, intercultural understanding, peace and reconciliation.

- **School systems should provide comprehensive sexuality education to all students**, regardless of gender, to ensure the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights of all women and girls.
- **Both the education system and governments should have a strong understanding of the measures necessary for gender equality in education so that no girls and women are left behind.** The continuity of education and life-long learning and peer learning for girls and women needs to be ensured. Early identification mechanisms for children with disabilities and girls at risk should be developed.
- **Other recommended measures include** establishing after school and community-based institutions to provide support and alternative learning pathways; strengthening partnerships to provide all students, especially girls, with mentorships and apprenticeships, especially in STEM and

to counter existing cultural stereotypes, which contribute to girls dropping out and prevent girls from pursuing scientific careers.

- **Delivering gender friendly facilities**, including adequate water, sanitation and health facilities and transport, in particular in rural areas, are also essential for a safe learning environment.
- Starting bursary schemes and cash transfers linked to girls' school attendance may keep girls in school and delay early marriage.

Acting for Climate: Empowering Women to Build Climate Resilience (Item 10)

- Climate change and disasters (be it environmental or ecological) disproportionately impact women and girls. Especially women in rural and remote areas, migrant women and young women are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. It is fundamental that the SDG leaving no one behind principle is understood and implemented consistently, and that resources focus on ensuring benefit to these particular groups.

- Climate change needs to be elevated and become central to gender activism through:
 - Stronger political will;
 - Participation of women in the decision-making processes at the highest level
 - Engagement of women, especially in male dominated climate change institutions and sectors;
 - Involvement of broad stakeholders including private sector, local government, national and international partners;
 - Improved research and data disaggregated by sex, age, indigenous groups and geographic locations;
 - Investment and innovative financing mechanisms with particular focus on direct support to rural women and women's organizations;

- While particular groups of women may be more vulnerable to climate change, all women have the potential to bridge understanding, identify solutions and build community resilience against environmental shocks and stresses. Women and girls can become agents for change.

- Risks associated with women's increased participation as climate change defenders should also be considered, such as risks to mental health and risk of violent attacks.

Finally, please let me thank you for all your engagement and your lively commitment during the past two days. It has been an honor for Switzerland and for me personally to co-chair this important meeting in preparation of the forthcoming anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in 2020.