

## Beijing+25 UNECE Regional Review Meeting

### “From commitments in Beijing to transformative results by 2030 – Gender equality in the ECE region”

Geneva, 29–30 October 2019

#### *ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: LESSONS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE REGION*

**29 October 2019, 15:00-18:00, Palais des Nations, Room XXII**

*Statement by Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences:*

1. I am very glad to participate at this panel on ending violence against women and girls in my capacity as **UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. The mandate was the first independent human rights mechanism established by the UN entrusted with integrating violence against women into the United Nations human rights framework and its mechanisms and to recommend to States measures to eliminate of violence against women, its causes and consequences.**
2. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action strongly confirmed **Women's Rights as Human Rights** and identified violence against women as one of its 12 areas of concern for priority action. It refers to the SRVAW mandate in the BPA para 124 (r) and (s), States were urged to *“cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women in the performance of her mandate and furnish all information requested”* and to *“renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women when her term ends in 1997 and, if warranted, to update and strengthen it. The mandate has been renewed as needed, while its strengthening is progressing slowly.*
3. During the past 25 years the mandate has developed a significant number of thematic and country specific reports related to ending violence against women. Let me briefly mention the most recent thematic reports that have focused on the following issues: the adequacy of the international legal framework on violence against women; online violence against women and girls; violence against women in politics; the modalities for the establishment of femicide/gender-related killings watch; violence against women during childbirth; a human rights based approach to integrated services with focus on shelters and protection orders all relevant for our discussion today.
4. The key findings from country and thematic reports are revealing the persistent and systematic nature of violence against women. The widespread tolerance and normalisation of violence against women is also of significant concern. In general there is a lack of human rights based approach to ending violence against women with States often failing to implement their “due diligence principle” on prevention, protection and prosecution. There is also a lack of incorporation and implementation of CEDAW and its General Recommendation 35 on gender based violence against women and other relevant regional instruments for this region, including the Istanbul Convention. Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 when relevant, in line with the CEDAW’s General Recommendation 30 is also limited. The lack of a holistic approach to combatting violence against women, combined

with insufficient integrated services and coordination mechanisms on violence against women is problematic. There is also a general lack of comparable administrative and prevalence data on violence against women, as well as a lack of comprehensive national action plans on violence against women with specific focus on minority, indigenous and other vulnerable groups of women and girls who experience higher rates of violence.

5. In some States there is push back against women's human rights, including campaigns against the ratification of the Istanbul convention and within that context, the term "gender" is also being misinterpreted as "gender ideology" and has led to an increase in gender-based violence against women. In some others there is lack of specific measures to combat violence against women, such as risk assessment tools for the police; insufficient number of shelters and rape crisis centres; lack of 24/7 help lines; lack of **support for NGOs in general and for those running services for victims of VAW**; inefficient "de gendered" protection orders; lack of proper criminalisation of sexual and domestic violence cases; lack of criminalisation of rape cases based on the lack of consent; lack of criminalisation of marital rape; lack of consideration of violence against women in the determination of child custody; inadequate statute of limitations for the prosecution of sexual violence against minors; re-victimization of victims of violence against women during the court proceedings; all of which culminate in an overall underreporting of violence against women and impunity for the perpetrators.
6. In June 2019, I presented my thematic report to the Human Rights Council, **which analyses 25 years of the mandate, the current challenges it faces and the way forward (A/HRC/41/42)**. The report also present the mandates contribution to the BPA+ 25 review process and includes a number of recommendations in this regard. It also calls **for further strengthening of the mandate that could be achieved as result of the BPA+ 25 review process**.
7. In that report I noted that the current approach to addressing violence against women within the United Nations system is fragmented, and that the adoption of a **system wide approach to eliminate violence against women and girls** is needed to strengthen the implementation of States human rights obligations in accordance with the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Declaration on the Elimination of violence against women, the Beijing Platform for Action and other **regional women's human rights instruments, including the Istanbul Convention, in order to** prevent and combat violence against women.
8. An essential part of this UN system wide approach to eliminating violence against women and girls, should be the institutionalization of the Platform on ending violence against women mechanisms, initiated by my mandate in 2017 (and supported by Switzerland, Spain and the Republic of Korea).
9. This Platform brings together representatives of seven UN and regional independent mechanisms on women's human rights, violence and discrimination against women, and includes: the Special Rapporteur on violence against women; the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women; the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice; the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa; the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention; and the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.
10. During the last year the Platform has issued a number of joint statements, including on the International Day on the Elimination of Violence against Women; on the current push back against women's rights; on the draft ILO Convention on violence against women and harassment in the work place; and most recently on Intimate partner violence against women as an essential factor in the determination of child custody.

11. The Platform is currently working on the development of a publication on the role of independent mechanisms on the elimination of violence against women in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
12. **Let me also mention the new CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 on gender based violence against women that updates its General Recommendation No. 19 on violence against women, which builds upon the jurisprudence and work developed by the CEDAW Committee and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. It also incorporates the contributions made by regional instruments including the new Council of Europe Convention on combating and preventing violence against women and domestic violence , the- Istanbul Convention.**
13. The CEDAW General Recommendation was elaborated by the CEDAW Committee, with the active participation of this mandate and now it should be widely promoted and fully implemented by all States. My mandate and the CEDAW Committee are planning to elaborate a Guide in order to provide a **more detailed roadmap** for its implementation, which will include examples of good practice in terms of prevention, protection and prosecution, as well as on the coordination of policies on gender based violence against women.
14. **Finally let me briefly mention the Femicide prevention watch initiative under which I call on all States to establish a femicide watch or observatory on violence against women and to publish**, analyse and provide me with data on femicide every year. The data provided should include intimate partner/family related Femicide based on the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and other femicide. I also called for the establishment of a national femicide watch or observatory on violence against women that should analyse cases in order to determine national shortcomings and focus on the prevention of such cases. This initiative is an implementation tool that is detecting measures needed to prevent violence against women. Since my 2016 report, significant progress has been made in developing national observatories and the collection of data on gender-related killings, however much remains to be done.
15. As we approach the 25 year review of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2020, starting with this regional UNECE review we must ensure that recognition of violence against women is included as a priority concern. At the last session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2019 I proposed that violence against women should be **addressed each year by the Commission, and also at the regional and national level. I take this opportunity today to repeat the proposal, and call upon you all to lend your support to it.**