

## Statement from Working Group III

As UNECE civil society organisations, we recognize the progress achieved to combat discrimination, advance equality, social inclusion, and human rights. Yet, progress is unequal in the region, and challenges remain. We call on governments to:

1. Adopt and implement anti-discrimination laws that protect people on all grounds, including disability, health status, ethnicity, legal status, religious and political convictions, socio-economic status, age, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity. Countries should adopt legal gender recognition based on self-determination for people of diverse gender identities; and remove discriminatory laws, including criminalization of HIV transmission.
  2. Take an intersectional and gender-transformative approach in all policies and programmes. To achieve social justice, systemic change is required. The specific experiences and needs of the most marginalized and hardest-to-reach must be addressed. Governments must implement targeted measures and affirmative actions, to combat exclusion and poverty, ensure access to social services, and actively promote equity.
  3. Combat all forms of gender-based violence, including online, sexual, institutional, gynaecological and obstetric violence, and harmful practices. All countries should ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention, and adopt consent-based laws on sexual violence.
  4. Change traditional gender norms, which are at the root of gender-based violence. Member States must notably provide mandatory comprehensive sexuality education in and out of schools, to challenge harmful gender norms and educate on consent.
  5. Combat the shrinking civic space. Civil society organisations, movements and human rights defenders who play a crucial role in advancing gender equality and combating anti-gender and anti-choice movements, must receive political and financial support, as well as protection from Member States.
- Thank you for your attention.