


**Economic Commission for Europe**
**Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting**

Geneva, 29-30 October 2019

**Report of the Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting**
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## I. Introduction

1. Resolution 2018/8 of the Economic and Social Council encouraged the United Nations Regional Commissions to undertake a regional review of the achievements made and challenges affecting the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the Twenty-Third special session of the General Assembly, as well as the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from a gender perspective. The regional reviews will feed into the global review at the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2020.
2. The Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) at its 101 meeting on 31 October 2018 decided to hold the Regional Review Meeting on 29 and 30 October 2019 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. The meeting was organized jointly by ECE and the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in cooperation with the regional offices of United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Development Programme, Food and Agricultural Organization.
3. The intergovernmental review meeting was preceded by the Beijing+25 Regional Civil Society Forum on 28 October 2019 in Geneva.
4. The key objectives of the Beijing+25 Regional Review meeting were to review progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the ECE region on the basis of national reports; to identify current challenges; to share good practices and provide direction for effective policies and actions. The discussions also addressed how strategies and policies for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## II. Attendance

5. The meeting was attended by representatives from 47 ECE member States: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Uzbekistan.
6. Representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and specialized agencies as well as other intergovernmental organizations were in attendance.
7. The meeting was attended by 856 participants, including representatives from over 170 non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
8. The list of participants, as well as meeting documents, panellists' interventions, and statements by member States, are available on the ECE website at <https://www.unece.org/beijing25.html>.

## III. Opening of the meeting (agenda item 1)

9. The meeting was opened by the ECE Executive Secretary, Ms. Olga Algayerova, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Āsa Regnér. Following these opening addresses, the representative of the Beijing+25 Global Youth Task Force, Ms. İlayda Eskitaşçioğlu, presented the civil society recommendations from the Beijing+25 Regional Civil Society Forum, see Annex II.

#### **IV. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (agenda item 2)**

10. The meeting adopted its agenda and organization of work (ECE/AC.28/2019/1).

#### **V. Election of chairpersons (agenda item 3)**

11. The following officers were elected:

Chairpersons: Ms. Altynai Omurbekova, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, and Ms. Pascale Baeriswyl, State Secretary, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland.

12. The election of officers was followed by opening remarks by the chairpersons.

#### **VI. Thematic dialogues**

13. The eight thematic panels focused on the following key issues: key trends on gender equality in the ECE region, closing the gender gaps through effective economic and social policies, ending violence against women and girls, education for gender equality as a powerful tool for transformation, financing for gender equality, women's representation in policymaking and decision-making, empowering women to build climate resilience and global goals and the Beijing commitments.

14. Panels were chaired by one of the co-chairpersons of the meeting, led by a moderator and introduced by four to seven panellists consisting of representatives from governments, specialized agencies, international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector. The interventions of the panellists were followed by an interactive debate for each panel.

##### **A. Key trends on gender equality across the UNECE region (agenda item 4)**

Moderator: Ms. Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, UN Women

Panellists: Ms. Monika Linn, Director, Sustainable Development and Gender Unit, UNECE, Ms. Altynai Omurbekova, Deputy Prime Minister, Kyrgyz Republic, Ms. Jovanka Trenchevska, State Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, North Macedonia, Ms. Virginija Langbakk, Director, European Institute for Gender Equality and Ms. Liliana Palihovici, Civil Society Representative (President of Association "Institutum Virtutes Civilis", Republic of Moldova).

##### **B. Closing the gender gaps: effective economic and social policies in the UNECE region (agenda item 5)**

Moderator: Ms. Sylvie Durrer, Director of the Federal Office for Gender Equality, Switzerland.

Civil society representatives setting the scene: Ms. Sonja Lokar, Civil Society Representative (Women's Lobby, Slovenia) and Ms. Asel Kubanychbekova, Civil Society Representative (Women Deliver Young Leader, Kyrgyz Republic).

Panellists for sub-sessions:

- *Closing the gender gaps in labour markets, entrepreneurship, social protection and services*: Ms. Hijran Huseynova, Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, Azerbaijan, Ms. Lenita Freidenvall, Deputy Head at the Division for Gender Equality, Sweden, Ms. Emanuela Pozzan, Senior Gender and Non-Discrimination Specialist, Conditions of Work and Equality Department, ILO and Ms. Hyeshin Park, Economist, Gender Programme Co-ordinator, OECD.

- *Closing the gender pay gap*: Ms. Mariam Jajanidze, Gender Equality Council, Parliament of Georgia, Ms. Rósa Guðrún Erlingsdóttir, Senior Adviser, Prime Minister's Office, Iceland, Ms. Jolanta Reingardé, Programme Coordinator, Research and Statistics, European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and Mr. Johannes Smits, Private Sector Representative, Director and Equal Pay Specialist, PwC.

### **C. Ending violence against women and girls: lessons and solutions from the region (agenda item 6)**

Moderator: Mr. Artiom Sici, State Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, Republic of Moldova

Panellists: Ms. Rebeca Palomo, State Commissioner on Violence Against Women, Spain, Mr. Joško Mandić, Expert Advisor, Agency for Gender Equality, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms. Marijke Weewauters, Head of the Federal Unit on Gender-based Violence, Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, Belgium, Ms. Marceline Naudi, President, Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), Council of Europe, Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, United Nations, Ms. Shazia Choudhry, Civil Society Representative (Professor of Law at Queen Mary, University of London/WAVE, United Kingdom) and Ms. Melsa Ararat, Private Sector Representative, Founding Director, Corporate Governance Forum of Turkey, Sabancı Business School, İstanbul.

### **D. Education for gender equality: a powerful tool for transformation (agenda item 7)**

Moderator: Ms. Vera Labkovich, Head, Department of Population, Gender and Family Policy, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Belarus

Panellists: Ms. Elina Kalkku, Under-Secretary of State for Development Policy at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland, Ms. Krista Pikkat, Director, Almaty Office for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, UNESCO, Ms. Hava Karrie, Director, MASHAV Carmel Training Center, Israel and Ms. Damel Mektepbayeva, Civil Society Representative (Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan).

### **E. Smart investments: financing for gender equality (agenda item 8)**

Moderator: Mr. Helmut Berger, Head of the Parliamentary Budget Office, Austria

Panellists: Ms. Eglantina Gjermeni, Chair of Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Gender Equality, Albania, Ms. Anna Björnermark, Associate Director for Gender Mainstreaming and Access to Services, European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Ms. Janet Veitch, Civil Society Representative (Chair, UK Women's Budget Group, United Kingdom) and Ms. Dana Haidan Georgakarakou, Private Sector Representative, Regional Head of Social Impact, VISA.

### **F. Women in leadership: women's representation in policy- and decision-making (agenda item 9)**

Moderator: Ms. Lena Ag, Director-General, Swedish Agency for Gender Equality, Sweden.

Panellists: Ms. Marija Blagojević, Women's Political Network, and Advisor to the President at the Parliament of Montenegro, Ms. Kateryna Levchenko, Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, Ukraine, Ms. Gulnara Ishankhanova, Head of Legal Department, Research Center "Oila", Cabinet of Ministers, Uzbekistan and Ms. Ana Sofia Fernandes, Civil Society Representative (Vice President, European Women's Lobby, Portugal).

## **G. Acting for climate: empowering women to build climate resilience (agenda item 10)**

Moderator: Ms. Galina Jevgrafova, Advisor, Ministry of Rural Affairs, Estonia.

Panellists: Ms. Katri Viinikka, Ambassador for Equality Issues, Finland, Ms. Sandra Nedeljkovic, Deputy Director, Public Investment Management Office, Serbia, Ms. Jeannette Gurung, Civil Society Representative (Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, United States) and Ms. Saltanat Rakhimbekova, Civil Society Representative (Coalition for green economy and development "G-Global", Kazakhstan).

## **H. Global goals and the Beijing commitments (agenda item 11)**

Moderator: Ms. Zhanna Andreasyan, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Armenia.

Panellists: Ms. Marlène Schiappa, Minister of State for Gender Equality, France, Ms. Merita Xhafa, General Director of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Albania, Ms. Astrid Krumwiede, Senior Expert, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany, Mr. Charles Ramsden, Chair of the Gender Equality Commission, Council of Europe, Ms. Silvana Cappuccio, Civil Society Representative (Italian General Confederation of Labour) and Ms. Selma Acuner, Civil Society Representative (Women for Women's Human Rights, Turkey).

## **VII. Co-chairpersons' summary and closure of the meeting (agenda item 12)**

15. The co-chairpersons presented the key messages from the thematic discussions. The participants in the meeting agreed that the draft co-chairpersons' conclusions of the discussions would be uploaded on the ECE website for comments from meeting participants. It was agreed that the final report, including as annexes the co-chairperson's conclusions and the civil society recommendations from the Beijing+25 Civil Society Forum, would be submitted to the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2020, as a regional input to the Beijing+25 global review.

## Annex I

### Co-chairpersons' conclusions

1. On the eve of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 5-year assessment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ECE member States and stakeholders at the Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting renewed their commitment to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women through the full and accelerated implementation of all critical areas of concern of the Beijing documents and the synergies with the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Participants stressed the need for comprehensive and coherent policies, strategies and urgent action to promote and protect women's and girls' human rights and fundamental freedoms, mainstream gender perspectives into all policies and programmes, ensure women's full and equal participation in policy and decision-making in all processes, including on climate change, the economic empowerment of women including through education, and enhance partnership and international cooperation to catalyse the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

### Key trends on gender equality across the UNECE region

3. The Regional Synthesis Report, which was prepared on the basis of 46 national reports submitted by the governments of ECE member States<sup>1</sup>, identified progress in all areas throughout our region since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and its linkages with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals for the ECE region.
4. Over the last five years, UNECE member States have prioritised work in three main areas: combating violence against women, women's economic empowerment and increasing women's political participation. Participants in the meeting concurred that advances have been widespread, although unequal and many challenges remain.
5. Violence against women and girls remains a significant challenge for all countries and all segments of society. All panellists and participants noted the impetus generated by the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) at the national level in the Council of Europe member States. The focus of most national efforts centred on combating two forms of violence against women and girls: domestic violence and human trafficking, including through an increase in scope and quality of services for survivors.
6. Countries made significant efforts to support women's inclusion in the labour force through the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, the expansion of kindergartens and the subsidization of child and elderly care, expanding paternity leave, addressing women's lower employment rates, lower pay and unequal capital income, and addressing vertical and horizontal segregation. Work-family reconciliation was targeted by many countries as a critical means of removing barriers to women's labour force participation. Gender equality and women's economic empowerment as a means for poverty reduction and decent work was underscored as critical for many countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).
7. Despite this progress, important gaps in policies and their effective implementation continue to hamper progress towards the full realization of women's economic potential. Women in the region continue to experience lower employment, shorter working hours, occupation segregation and lower pay and capital income than men. Quality and affordable child care and social services are undersupplied in many countries, limiting women's opportunity to full-time employment. Unequal sharing of household work and of care for the

<sup>1</sup> Another 5 national reports were received after the preparation of the Regional Synthesis Report.

children, the sick and the elderly continued to be common across the region. The lowest women's employment and wage rates are often registered in families with small children. Gender-stereotyped subject choices in school is a persistent trend with long-term consequences for women.

8. Progress in women's political participation across region is uneven, and particularly low at the local level. A few countries are close to parity at the national level, and numerous others are initiating, or have applied quotas.

9. Panellists and participants reiterated the need for sufficient financing as one of the biggest barriers to advance women's empowerment. The lack of financial and human resources renders national and local gender machineries weak and marginalised. The under-financing of civil society organisations has a deteriorating effect on the quality and scope of service provisions for survivors of violence, including adequate shelter space. Limited financing reflects, in part, the restricted space and support for CSOs in light of the rise of conservatism and right-wing movements in parts of the region.

10. It is important to address the multiple and intersecting form of violence against women and girls and discrimination in all sectors, and to leave no one behind. Panellists and participants drew attention to the diverse groups of women, including: migrant women, LGBTIQ women, women with disabilities, sex workers, ethnic and racial minorities, single mothers and elderly women, among others, and the need for special measures for these groups.

11. Sub-regional consultations on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action have revealed specific areas of progress and challenges observed in a number of countries in the last five years. The Central Asian Dialogue of Civic Activists held in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic (September 2019) brought together representatives of governments, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. While progressive legislation had been passed in all countries, challenges with implementation remain. All participants noted the importance of expanding the dialogue to peace and security and addressing challenges related to migration, climate change and demographic trends. There is a need to build capacity and provide role models to women and girls to transform society; to give women the power to become active participants in the economy and in conflict prevention. Adapting to technological progress, including the use of digital and social media to accelerate gender equality, is another important area.

12. Progress in normative policies was observed in the countries in Western Balkans and Turkey, as revealed in the sub-regional consultation held in Skopje, North Macedonia (October 2019). Countries have committed to gender equality through national action plans on women, peace and security, preventing gender-based violence, enabling access to free health care for sexual and reproductive health and rights, introducing quotas at national and local levels; and supporting women from highly vulnerable groups. Despite progress in these areas, challenges remain. Gender machineries remain underfinanced, gender stereotypes persist, discrimination of women in the workplace and unequal pay, sexism against women and girls, prevailing gender-based violence and femicide continue. Specific policies and measures are needed to reduce poverty among women and girls, improve access to public services, promote women's participation in decision-making and in peace and security processes, and strengthen partnership with new media.

13. Similar challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action were shared in the sub-regional consultation held in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova (September 2019). In countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus gender stereotypes and strong gender-biased mindset persist, and the integration of gender aspects in public policies remains limited. Gender related policies are underfinanced, and gender machineries lack the needed human and financial resources to perform effectively.

14. The countries of the European Union are advanced in the field of gender equality compared to other sub-regions. There are indicators and data for monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action which allows to identify trends and provide direction to EU policymakers. Yet, 7.7 million women do not work in this sub-region,

with a significant economic impact. Nine million women work part time because of domestic care responsibilities. The unpaid care and domestic work limits women's engagement in the labour market, in policy and decision-making, and contributes, among other things, to pay and pensions gaps.

15. A key challenge in the region is the absence of a gender perspective in environmental protection, climate change and disaster-risk management, with only a few countries starting to adopt policies. Another emerging challenge, namely online forms of violence against women and girls like cyber-stalking and trolling, requires a comprehensive response across educational, criminal justice and ICT sectors. The increase of migration flows into the region poses the risk of growing poverty among women migrants, as many of them remain unemployed, and/or are not enrolled in educational programmes.

16. Monitoring and reporting on gender equality in many areas lack sufficient sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics. There is lack of common definitions, methodologies or analysis to make comparisons between countries and sub-regions possible.

### **Closing the gender gaps: effective economic and social policies in the UNECE region**

17. Despite multiple legal changes and policy initiatives, structural inequalities persist. Discriminatory practices have been reduced but continue. The participation of women in the labour market is unequal and is accompanied by significant occupational and sectoral segregation. These gender differences are the expression of other inequalities, in particular, in the sharing of unpaid work. They translate into lower current and future earnings, constraining choices and undermining personal independence.

18. The persistence of these inequalities suggests that policy efforts need to be equally persistent and far-reaching. Changing legal frameworks is necessary but not sufficient. Effective policies need to be accompanied by appropriate resources to bring about change. Gender equality does not happen overnight: it requires multiple reforms and a continued commitment to address remaining gaps.

19. Regarding the gender pay gap, the meeting focused on existing practices and tools to collect and reveal data on wage differences, and on mechanisms to address unequal remuneration for work of equal value. While it is shrinking in most countries, the pace of change remains slow. Even in countries with a high degree of gender equality, it is proving hard to eliminate gender differences in pay. A gender pay gap translates into a gender pension gap, which compounds the impact of social protection systems that are not gender neutral.

20. There are various factors explaining the gender pay gap. Part-time employment is more frequent among women. Educational choices and occupational segregation mean that women are less present in higher-paying sectors. The prevalence of harmful stereotypes and outright discrimination puts women at a disadvantage. The unequal sharing of unpaid work represents an unfair burden for women that limits their career options.

21. Policies for gender equality and the empowerment of women are an investment in the future. Resources allocated should therefore not be seen as a cost but as a contribution to advance fairer societies that benefit from the full potential of all their members. More diverse workplaces are more productive and generate more job satisfaction.

22. Effective gender mainstreamed policies need to be forward-looking, addressing the implications of existing and emerging trends. The world of work is transforming under the impact of rapidly changing technology. Avoiding the reproduction of existing inequalities in this new context would require addressing traditional factors explaining gender gaps, such as the unequal sharing of unpaid work and the inflexibility of working practices. But policies should also aim to take advantage of the potential of technological change to contribute to gender equality and open new perspectives for women's empowerment.

23. Policy recommendations:



- (a) Countries should adopt and ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention of 2019 (No.190), as well as adopt national guidelines on prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace.
- (b) Barriers that prevent a fuller involvement of women in promising technological sectors, such as unequal opportunities for access to training or harmful stereotypes, should be tackled.
- (c) Specific actions should target groups that are particularly disadvantaged, such as rural and migrant women, as those face especially large gender gaps and more challenges.
- (d) The design of social protection systems should aim to overcome existing biases, including by selecting women as beneficiaries.
- (e) Bodies tasked with monitoring different aspects related to gender gaps should be given appropriate resources and enforcing powers.
- (f) The gender pay gap reflects multiple and interconnected sources of discrimination. Policies need to address these multiple sources, through an interconnected but differentiated approach.
- (g) Certification schemes for equal pay can ensure that legislation is effectively enforced. However, voluntary schemes may be insufficient to guarantee appropriate progress and compulsory elements may need to be added.
- (h) Companies, in particular large ones, should establish gender equality plans addressing various gaps that emerge in the workplace. Commitments should be measurable, monitored and actively enforced.
- (i) Procurement can be used as an instrument to ensure that only companies offering equal pay benefit from public contracts.
- (j) Working closely with the business sector is essential to ensure that regulations and initiatives aiming at closing the gender pay gap and other forms of discrimination are well understood and applied. A collaborative approach in critical areas such as training can yield positive results.
- (k) Policies should aim to eliminate any disadvantage for women arising from the decision to have a child. Investing in good quality childcare, appropriately designed maternity and parental leaves and flexible working arrangements are critical to facilitate women's careers and access to good quality jobs.
- (l) Social norms and unequal gender expectations regarding care are critical barriers and should be addressed through appropriate policies that involve men in the necessary change. Work-life balance programmes that target both the private and public sectors are required.

### **Ending violence against women and girls: lessons and solutions from the region**

24. Violence against women and girls is an obstacle to women's equality and to their ability to enjoy all other basic human rights. It has short- and long-term adverse consequences on women's and girls' health, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights. No custom, tradition, culture, religion or practice can justify gender-based violence nor serve to avoid state obligations to prevent and eliminate it and to prosecute the perpetrators.

25. Violence against women and girls continues to exist in many forms in the region: from intimate partner violence that can entail physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse to femicide, sexual harassment and rape, violence committed through social media, stalking, so-called "honour killings", trafficking, female genital mutilation, prenatal sex selection and kidnapping for forced and child marriage. New forms of assaults against women and girls increasingly occur online and through social media.

26. The Istanbul Convention is a driver of change in the legislation of many countries. Yet, its implementation remains insufficient and uneven across the region.

27. Stronger links should be made between the Istanbul Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its General recommendation No 35, the new ILO Violence and Harassment Convention of 2019 (No.190) and its Recommendation (No. 206), and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights in the implementation of international commitments by all national actors. These international instruments not only guide legislative change, but also lead to changes in practice.

28. The meeting addressed the need to systematically collect data, disaggregated by sex, gender and other characteristics to monitor the incidence of, and response to gender-based violence and to provide evidence for policy-making. In most countries, the dataset collected by different stakeholders are not comparable, and the lack of confidentiality and protection standards compromise victims' rights.

29. A unified response is required to effectively counter the pushback from conservative movements that question the concept of "gender" and on that basis impede the application of international norms to combat violence against women and girls in the region.

30. CSOs raised concerns on the increase and spread of the use of concepts of 'parental alienation' to minimise allegations of domestic abuse by perpetrators trying to gain access and custody of the children. This is placing women and children survivors of domestic abuse in increasingly unsafe positions and there are increasing examples of women and children being harmed or killed because of orders made by the family courts.

31. Policy recommendations:

(a) All countries should ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention, which provides the legal and policy framework for national authorities to develop and implement comprehensive and coordinated policies involving government agencies, CSOs as well as national, regional and local parliaments and authorities, and international organizations.

(b) All governments should develop comprehensive strategies and national action plans, and establish national coordinating bodies to guide stakeholder collaboration and the implementation of protocols on response and protection. These policies and measures should be backed by sufficient financing, including for CSOs. All forms of violence against women should be criminalized, including emerging forms, such as through information and communication technologies targeting women who actively participate in the public sphere. Femicide should be systematically prosecuted.

(c) As key experts and service providers, CSOs should be involved in policy development and implementation. Survivors should also be consulted. Further involvement of the private sector, including through the implementation of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention of 2019 (No.190) and Recommendation (No. 206) should be strengthened.

(d) National coordination bodies should be established to ensure the comprehensive collection, disaggregation, analysis and dissemination of data on violence against women and girls across agencies. Data should be disaggregated by diverse characteristics, including the relationship between the survivors and the perpetrators. National coordination bodies should be given sufficient authority to effectively undertake their duties and accelerate implementation of existing policies and measures.

(e) Actions should be undertaken to address the insufficient institutional capacities for the implementation of the respective legislation and policies, including training of service providers, health professionals, teachers, police, prosecutors, etc.

(f) Coordinated multi-sectoral services and care for women and girls survivors of violence should be established at the local level, including specialised services for vulnerable groups who experience multiple and intersecting forms of violence and

discrimination. Increased financing should be accompanied by a holistic response to their needs. Protection orders should be effectively monitored, without exceptions for parents with joint custody, and be guided by individualised risk assessments.

(g) Cross-regional cooperation and exchange of experience and lessons learned in the implementation of legislation and policies aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls should be strengthened.

(h) Special outreach strategies should be built for survivors of violence, addressing women facing multiple forms of discrimination.

(i) All countries should establish multidisciplinary national bodies such as “Femicide Watch” with the aim to actively work on prevention of femicide or gender-related killing of women.

(j) All countries should take the necessary legislative and other measures to provide for the setting up of appropriate, easily accessible rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres for survivors in sufficient numbers to provide for medical and forensic examination, trauma support and counselling for survivors.

### **Education for gender equality: a powerful tool for transformation**

32. Education is critical for escaping poverty and a powerful tool for transforming the lives of women and girls. It is also a driving factor to make economies stable and prosperous. Panellists and participants shared experience in establishing a national system that promotes gender equality and contributes to sustainable growth. Key elements of such a system include compulsory education for up to upper secondary school level, free education from the pre-school to the higher education level, incorporation of equality concerns into national core curricula across education system and reducing segregation, so that boys and girls equally take subjects at school that are traditionally associated with a specific gender.

33. In the ECE region, women and girls either equal or exceed men and boys in educational enrolment. Women also present a majority of all graduates from tertiary education. However, literacy rate among females above the age of 15 is consistently lower than that of males.

34. Despite some advancement, horizontal and vertical segregation persists among students and the workforce in the sector. Women prevail as teachers in primary and secondary education in most countries. Yet, men dominate as teachers in tertiary education and in senior academic posts. Fewer women than men choose subjects in STEM fields, which is not only impeding women’s full participation in the labour market, including equal pay, but reduces their potential to succeed in a rapidly changing job market with high demand for technological skills.

35. In some countries in Europe and Central Asia progress in access to education has not been accompanied by inclusion and equality. Fewer than 50 per cent of the children, on average, attend early childhood education; primary school participation has stagnated; only half of the adolescents develop proficiency in necessary skills. Education systems, curriculum and teachers are not providing competencies for global citizenship and peace. The most marginalized are left the furthest behind. Children with disabilities go undetected and miss out on critical opportunities for early intervention and high-quality learning. Social norms and inadequate teacher training lead to students with disabilities being sent to separate classes and institutions even when this is not needed. Girls with disabilities are less frequently diagnosed than boys and remain invisible in statistics but are overrepresented in residential care. Social and structural discrimination affects ethnic and linguistic minorities and exposes girls to gender-based violence and child marriage.

36. Women’s and girls’ rights cannot be achieved without their right to make informed decisions throughout their own life. Having access to comprehensive sexuality education is key to the realization of their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

37. Panellists and participants addressed the importance to provide lifelong learning opportunities for women, including through developing educational programmes and materials.

38. Policy recommendations:

- (a) Countries should adopt comprehensive and equitable legal, policy and planning frameworks to prevent gender discrimination and to dismantle barriers to education and lifelong learning through:
  - i. assessing the extent to which gender equality is mainstreamed in national education policies, legal frameworks, plans and education interventions
  - ii. improving disaggregated data for education sector analysis, planning, budgeting and monitoring information systems to address context-specific barriers that impede gender equality through education.
  - iii. providing free and compulsory education for all children
- (b) Countries should strengthen the quality of education to ensure a preparedness for life as well as for school to work transition
  - i. Throughout the curriculum, learning materials and teacher development, applying innovation, ICT education and entrepreneurship and mainstreaming skills for global citizenship, intercultural understanding, peace and reconciliation
  - ii. ensuring that a school system provides a comprehensive sexuality education to all students, regardless of gender, to ensure a realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights of all women and girls
  - iii. ensuring well trained and supported educators to address gender stereotypes
  - iv. applying an inclusive and whole education institution approach throughout the education sector, starting from pre-primary education.
- (c) Countries should provide measures so that no girls and women are left behind through:
  - i. ensuring a continuity of education and lifelong learning and peer-learning for girls and women.
  - ii. supporting after school and community-based clubs to provide support and alternative learning pathways.
  - iii. strengthening partnerships to provide all students, especially girls, with mentorships and apprenticeships, especially in STEM.
  - iv. providing positive messaging to counter existing cultural stereotypes, which contribute to girls dropping out and prevent girls from pursuing scientific careers.
  - v. developing early identification mechanisms for children with disabilities and girls at-risk.
  - vi. delivering gender friendly facilities, including water sanitation and health and transport in rural areas.
  - vii. starting bursary schemes and cash transfers linked to girls' attendance and the delay of marriage.

### **Smart investments: financing for gender equality**

39. Investing in gender equality translates commitments into meaningful action and implementation. Without proper financing by national budgets and an increase in aid targeting gender equality, international and national commitments to gender equality and the full empowerment of women cannot be achieved. These endeavours should be accompanied

by investments from the private sector with the active involvement of feminist economists, academia and civil society to ensure inclusive decision making at all levels.

40. Panellists and participants underscored the importance of national governments' financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women through allocation of financial resources to specific areas and mainstreaming gender in macroeconomic policies. While countries in the region have indicated an increase in the allocation of national budgets to address gender related issues, such as gender-based violence and reconciliation of work/family responsibilities, there is still very limited effective monitoring of national budget allocations from a gender perspective.

41. Countries shared experiences in the use of gender-responsive budgeting as a tool to ensure enhanced transparency and commitments towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. They reiterated that socially inclusive and gender-responsive budgeting is the key principle and a critical means to achieving the SDGs and leave no one behind. In some countries, the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting resulted in an increased number of government programmes and projects with gender specific objectives. It also contributed to strengthening the reflection of gender in programmes and projects for development cooperation.

42. Mainstreaming gender into broader sectoral processes through gender responsive budgeting tools requires gender analysis to be systematically carried out in all activities using comprehensive data. The lack of sex-disaggregated data and the insufficient capacity to use this data for the purposes of gender impact assessments are a significant barrier in many countries of the region.

43. Financing for gender equality is smart investment. In the private sector, investment strategies aim to advance gender equality by investing in women-led businesses, including through capacity building and providing loans; in institutions with gender-diverse staff and leadership; and in companies that advance gender equality through their products and services.

44. Participants underscored the importance of putting in place effective mechanisms to systematically track allocations for activities related to gender equality and women's empowerment in order to ensure that accountability is in place.

45. Policy recommendations:

- (a) Countries should ensure reliable, systematic and adequate funding from national budgets to implement international and national commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- (b) Countries should increase investing into gender-responsive physical and social care infrastructure on the basis of gender impact assessment of investments both in the short- and long term.
- (c) Countries should promote sharing of domestic and care work between women and men based on gender assessment of labour markets and the links between paid and unpaid work, and consider subsidizing childcare, kindergartens and eldercare, and child- and gender-responsive non-contributory social welfare schemes.
- (d) Countries should adopt and implement gender-responsive budgeting legislation to ensure transparency and accountability by
  - i. adopting and implementing gender-responsive budgeting guidelines
  - ii. fostering increased cooperation between finance ministries, parliaments, national gender equality machinery, national statistical offices, CSOs and academics
  - iii. developing a gender strategy for priority sectors with gender objectives, key activities, indicative resources and gender-disaggregated indicators as part of a national strategy

- iv. implementing a mechanism to track allocations for gender-specific activities and report to Parliament and the public, including by publishing annual gender statements
- (e) Countries should establish strong institutional and coordination structure that support gender-responsive budgeting through
  - i. enshrining the principle of gender-responsive budgeting into budget legislation
  - ii. deepening gender-responsive governance capacities throughout government institutions, Parliament, civil society and academia
  - iii. developing guidelines for preparing gender related information for the budget
  - iv. establishing or empowering an entity for coordinating, designing and implementing gender-responsive budgeting
  - v. ensuring inclusive decision making by representation of women in fiscal decision-making, including in financial institutions at all levels, and systematic engagement of all relevant stakeholder, such as civil society and academia
- (f) Countries should close gaps in sex-disaggregated data by increased investment in research and collaboration between national statistical offices, national gender equality machineries, civil society, academia and marginalized groups.
- (g) Countries should ensure sustained financial and technical support to civil society and women's organizations, including those led by young feminists and women, representing a broad range of stakeholders and the most vulnerable communities.
- (h) Countries should exploit the high potential of partnership with the private sector in research, development of skills and capacity building of women, women's small and medium entrepreneurship, women in sports etc.
- (i) Governments should support investment strategies in the private sector, to advance gender equality by investing in women-led businesses, including capacity building and providing loans, and in companies that advance gender equality through their products and services.
- (j) Countries should strengthen the reflection of gender in programmes and projects for development cooperation by an increased number of programmes and projects with gender specific objectives.
- (k) Governments should address gender inequality through mainstreaming gender in macroeconomic policies, such as taxation and fiscal measures, and conducting ex ante gender impact assessment of austerity measures.

### **Women in leadership: women's representation in policy- and decision-making**

46. The empowerment of women as leaders and decision-makers is of critical importance to sustainable development. Gender-balanced decision-making is a matter of justice, responsive governance and respect for human rights. But women's participation in leadership positions in politics, as well as public and private sectors benefits economies and contributes to the creation of inclusive societies.

47. There is measurable progress in the region in women's participation in leadership and decision-making domains. This is due to different legislative changes and affirmative measures undertaken by governments, as well as capacity development support from different organizations.

48. However, barriers remain to the full realization of gender equality in political and public life. These include gender stereotypes, low levels of self-confidence among women, gender pay gaps, women's disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work, sub-optimal levels of childcare infrastructure, and unfair distribution of household responsibilities. The anti-gender movement is a new threat to gender equality, affecting not

only countries in the ECE region but in other parts of the world. Violence against women in politics remains widespread and extends to vicious forms of cyberviolence which deter women, especially younger women, from entering political and public life.

49. Successful and durable alliances strengthen the influence of women in politics. Several countries shared experience in setting up women's political networks that helped women to speak with one voice regardless of political affiliation. In other countries, advances in women's decision-making benefited from a broader support by women and men towards equal opportunities for all at national and local levels.

50. Policy recommendations:

- (a) All stakeholders, including government, parliament, civil society organisations, international organizations, should combine forces to counter the recent harmful gender backlash trends and address persistent structural inequalities.
- (b) States should strengthen anti-discriminatory measures to ensure an environment free from discrimination in political and public spheres at all levels.
- (c) Civil society, especially women's organizations, should be strengthened in voice, expertise and sustained funding, so that they can play their part in changing the mindsets of leaders and population in overcoming gender inequalities.
- (d) There is a need to use a variety of models to bring more women into politics and decision-making through various networks, engaging senior leaders and broadening support at local, regional and sub-regional levels.
- (e) It is vital to maximize the use of information technologies to strengthen networking and build broad alliances with civil society and other stakeholders, especially young women and men.
- (f) International organizations, regional and global civil society networks should strengthen support throughout the whole process of women's engagement and their career development in political and economic life to ensure that fragile gains are not lost.
- (g) Countries should support strategic dialogues to forge alliances and establish regional exchanges that can support women's political networks.

### **Acting for climate: empowering women to build climate resilience**

51. Women and environment is one of the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action. With the intensification of climate change and the threat it poses to safety and well-being of people worldwide, it has become increasingly important. Urgent actions are required to target its three strategic objectives: involving women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels, integrating their concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes, and establishing ways to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

52. Climate change and disasters, be it environmental or ecological, have disproportionate impacts on women and girls. Women in rural and remote areas are particularly at risk due to their roles of primary caregivers and providers of food. Migrant women and young women are also more vulnerable. It is fundamental that the leaving no one behind principle is understood and implemented consistently, and that resources focus on ensuring benefits to all, including these groups.

53. Mitigating the climate crisis and transforming to a new model of resource use and lifestyle was in the center of several panellists and participants interventions. As a result of existing gaps between the gender community and the environment community, only a few countries managed to mainstream gender in climate change policies. Women's groups and young women were key drivers of change in these countries and had a leading role in the development of government programmes there.

54. Policy recommendations:
- (a) Mainstream gender in policies on climate change adaptation and environmental protection, ensure financial and institutional support, gender expertise, strong policy directives and establish focal points on gender and climate change across government institutions.
  - (b) Promote the participation of women in STEM activities to make them actors in renewable energy, climate change actions and the green economy.
  - (c) Elevate climate change and make it central to gender activism through:
    - i. ensuring stronger political will across all levels of government and increased spending on climate action;
    - ii. engaging men, and strengthen the role of women professionals, especially in male dominated climate change institutions and sectors (energy, forestry, agriculture, natural resource management);
    - iii. fostering diverse partnerships with broad stakeholders including the private sector, local government, national and international partners;
    - iv. improving research and data disaggregated by sex, age, indigenous groups and geographic locations to provide evidence of the impact of climate change;
    - v. increasing investment and developing innovative financing mechanisms with a focus on the provision of targeted support to rural women and women's organizations;
    - vi. improving measuring of impacts and results to better demonstrate effects on women's empowerment.
    - vii. prioritizing the implementation of policies and action, especially capacity development.
  - (d) Women need to play stronger roles in the climate change space as leaders, professionals and technical agents for change. 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' roles as agents for change should be recognised and supported through:
    - i. increased education for girls in technical and non-traditional fields related to climate change actions (such as STEM);
    - ii. financial and capacity building support for women's organizations and associations at all levels;
    - iii. advocacy for and by young women continue their important role as conscious consumers.
    - iv. continuous participation and leadership support for women agricultural small holders
  - (e) Risks associated with women's increased participation as climate change defenders should be investigated, documented and mitigated where possible, such as risks to mental health and risk of violent attacks.

### **Global goals and the Beijing commitments**

55. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has affirmed the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a stand-alone goal as well as a pre-requisite to the attainment of all other SDGs. Progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in its 12 critical areas of concern, from women's labour force participation, education and women's poverty to women in environment, reflects the advancement in achieving SDG 5 and cuts across the other SDGs with gender-specific targets.



56. The alignment of the two frameworks is reflected across six overarching thematic areas: inclusive development, prosperity and decent work; tackling poverty and social protection; freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes; participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions; peaceful and inclusive societies; and environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation. Overall there has been progress in these areas; however, it remains insufficient.

57. Progress in inclusive development and shared prosperity has been achieved by advancing women's participation in the economy, including entrepreneurship, and improving legal frameworks. At the same time, structural barriers to gender equality and discrimination continue to manifest as unequal labour force participation, occupational segregation, unequal working conditions and remuneration.

58. Access to social protection, health and education is crucial for reducing the risk of poverty for women and girls and for empowering women and girls in all areas of their lives. Overall, the gender perspective has been strengthened in health, education and social protection policies. A more targeted approach has been taken to address the risk of poverty for vulnerable women, such as women in old age, for single mothers and mothers with many children, disabled and rural women, and women belonging to ethnic minorities. However, barriers continue to impede women's and girls' access to social services, health and education.

59. Violence against women and girls remains a major obstacle to women's equality and human rights. It takes many forms, including intimate partner violence, femicide, human trafficking, sexual harassment, violence committed through social media, female genital mutilation, early, and child and forced marriage, forced sterilization and abortion, and prenatal sex selection. Women and girls also continue to be exposed to stigma, stereotypes and widespread sexism.

60. The Beijing Conference in 1995 was momentous for the international recognition of gender equality. It was followed by many positive achievements in terms of women's participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions. Currently, a pushback on women's rights can be observed at national and international levels, which is adversely affecting the lives of women and girls. Women's participation particularly in the political sphere remains low.

61. Women and girls experience violations of human rights and humanitarian law during conflict, suffering gender-specific crimes as a result of war, violent conflict, terrorism and violent extremism. While most countries in the region have adopted a national strategy or action plan on women, peace and security, the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda remains slow. Women remain under-represented in decision-making positions in diplomatic and military sectors in most countries of the ECE region.

62. Environmental degradation and climate change are displacing communities, interrupting income generation, increasing unpaid labour burdens and negatively affecting health, especially for women and girls. At the same time, reflecting gender issues has often been neglected in environmental and climate change policies, as well as in important related areas such as mobility, waste management and sustainable consumption and production. Women's participation in decision-making in these areas remains poor.

63. Policy recommendations:

- (a) Protect freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining to ensure equal opportunities between women and men.
- (b) Ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention of 2019 (No. 190) and accompanying Recommendation (No. 106).
- (c) Invest in gender-responsive public services and care and promote the reconciliation of work and family, including by ratifying and implementing the ILO Maternity Protection Convention of 2000 (No. 183).
- (d) Prioritize the social inclusion of women in legislation and practice.

- (e) Train health workers on sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence and enhance availability of and access to related health services.
- (f) Implement the Council of Europe's first-ever recommendation on preventing and combating sexism, which includes a definition of sexism and proposes concrete ways for different actors to identify and address it.
- (g) Implement the Council of Europe's recommendation on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- (h) Promote the broad and meaningful participation of civil society, women's organizations and marginalized groups in decision- and policy-making at all levels, including through innovative modalities and new technologies. The participation of young women and youth should be encouraged in particular.
- (i) Ensure that progress goes beyond normative areas. Actual implementation of national legislation and international commitments and accountability for gender equality is crucial.
- (j) Anchor gender equality in all constitutions, as appropriate.
- (k) Accelerate the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, including through dedicated commitments in national action plans.
- (l) Mainstream gender into policies on environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation and climate change.
- (m) Improve regional/international cooperation and exchange in all areas related to the Beijing commitments

## Annex II

### **Beijing+25 CSO Forum on the UNECE Regional Review Meeting**

More than 410 civil society members from 282 organisations and 45 countries of the UNECE region met on the 28th of October 2019 in Geneva.

In total 6 regional statements and 22 thematic priorities were discussed at the CSO forum in break out groups, see <https://www.wecf.org/csforum25-geneva/>.

The following synthesis statement was presented in the opening of the Beijing+25 UNECE Regional Review Meeting.

Young feminists see that we face critical challenges today that threaten to roll-back the many achievements we have gained and continue to live in a world in which patriarchy, sexism, capitalism, ageism, racism, heteronormativity, and xenophobia drive women's oppression and inequality. We face a climate crisis that, if not dealt with right now, will leave us all with no future to speak of. We retained the following key messages from the Civil Society Forum

#### **1. Inclusion**

##### **Engaging young feminists**

Youth activists clearly face barriers in regard to accessing to international platforms and spaces like this very room. In order to facilitate this, more direct funding to youth led organizations is needed. We demand structural changes and suggest 30% involvement of young feminists under 30 in decision making processes, and a transition from hierarchical to horizontal structures to foster more collaborations and co-creation. It is important to build digital infrastructure for better networking and connection with grassroots youth organizations who may not be able to travel.

##### **Rights of LGBTI and gender non-conforming (GNC) women and people**

Concerning the rights of LGBTI and gender non-conforming women and people, it is vital to repeal laws and policies which directly or indirectly criminalize people based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression. Furthermore, legislation and policies which explicitly protect LGBTI and GNC women and people from discrimination and violence must be enacted, which include access to employment, education, housing, healthcare, and other social services. In addition, States must provide access to legal gender recognition on the basis of self-determination and ban all non-consensual, harmful, and medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex children.

##### **Rights of women with disabilities**

Developing effective measures to mainstream the rights of women and girls with disabilities in policies, programs and measures, is the key, this must involve women and girls with disabilities in the development and implementation of such policies and programs. Further, the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing violence against women and girls with disabilities must be ratified by all States. The commitments that have been set in the CRPD must be upheld, including the Optional Protocol and General Comment 3 on women and girls with disabilities.

##### **Rights of migrant women**

For the rights of migrant women, we recommend strict measures and penalties against racial profiling, to fight against institutional and structural racism. Safety from gender-based violence in dangerous migration routes and detention centers must be ensured. Residential citizenships should be given to all children of migrant women after arrival, and migrant

women who report abuse in their informal work environments should be protected from deportation and sanctions.

### **Rights of Indigenous and Roma people**

To achieve gender equality we must recognize Indigenous, Roma and Sami women's rights and the importance of their voices that have been historically silenced. Specific funding, time and spaces are needed to support this community and its advocates, as well as in the provision and funding of public services and social protection systems. Financial, practical, social, and policy barriers, which include racism and lack of health insurance and identity documents, must be removed in their access to sexual and reproductive health care.

### **Rural women and economic empowerment**

Young rural women are the future, they are in the intersection of gender equality, food security, and sustainable development. We need to tackle the isolation problem of rural women, listen to rural women, ensure their safety, health and education, invest in their existence, strengthen rural-urban communication, and protect their right to financial inclusion, to land, property, and productive and natural resources.

### **Rights of widows**

The rights of widows are a critically neglected human rights issue. The numbers of widows are increasing exponentially in the region due to conflict, migration, natural disasters, harmful traditional practices, and longer life spans. Widows' rights to inheritance, land and property must be enshrined and enforced in law, and legal documentation, resources, and special attention to their access to services is urgent. Widows are of all ages and include young refugee women.

### **Rights of older women**

Older women routinely have their rights and needs denied due to ageism, stigma, poverty, and violence perpetrated against them. Recognition of their economic and social contributions is essential. Resources must be committed to ensuring their economic security, safety, and dignity. Furthermore, intergenerational solidarity must be affirmed as the bedrock of all age-inclusive policy planning and service delivery to improve the lives and dignity of people of all ages, and to ensure that older women are seen as rights holders with equal entitlements. Inadequate data for women over age 49 is a key driver of the denial of older women's rights, therefore disaggregated data by age, gender and disability with five-year intervals over age 49 until death, is needed, and must inform all policies.

## **2. Emerging problems and structural challenges**

One of the most critical issues we face as women's rights activists, is how to respond to the increasing effects of anti-rights agendas, shrinking space for civil society, and systematic attacks on human rights, in general, and women's and marginalized groups' rights in particular, driven by neo-conservative governments, the private sector, and well-resourced and globally well connected fundamentalist faith based organisations. We are calling on governments and intergovernmental bodies to renew their gender equality commitments, to reaffirm the principle of non-regression, and increase accountability among international organizations and governments contributing to transparency, ensuring human and women's rights, and reducing implementation gaps and impunity. Furthermore, all economic policies must be aligned with international human rights law, women's rights frameworks, and in promoting the rights of those traditionally marginalised.

### **Climate, environment and women's rights**

The climate crisis is having devastating impacts on the rights of women on the frontlines, in particular rural and indigenous women, whose needs and participation must be prioritized in national climate programs and in climate funding to achieve the Paris Agreement.

Governments must divest from extractive and fossil fuel sectors and invest in sustainable local sectors that have committed to gender equality, set and fulfil targets for women's participation and leadership in sustainable energy and climate policy decision-making and climate actions, and protect environmental and climate defenders who suffer from violence and harassment due to their gender.

### **Structural economic barriers**

In order to overcome structural problems, especially economic barriers, we need to disrupt and redefine what we value and how. We call for a complete overhaul of the current economic system, moving away from extractive and profit-driven capitalism. We need to move towards a care economy focused on people and planet and create measures that value social progress, recognizes unpaid care work as "work" that gives right to social protection, connects social protection and taxing systems to individual rights, and addresses gender-based violence at work.

### **Violence against women and girls (VAWG)**

There are many dimensions to violence against women and girls. Deeply ingrained patriarchal structures reinforce harmful gender stereotypes and violate women's rights to bodily integrity and autonomy. The main recommendations focus on improving access to justice and removing barriers to reporting. We also call for national action plans on violence against women based on gender equality, gender mainstreaming and budgeting, including steps for prevention through education and awareness, starting from pre-school age. Faster investigation and prosecution processes, better coordination among state agencies in cases of emergency, preventing impunity of perpetrators yet also rehabilitating them with a purpose of transforming toxic masculinity, multisectoral teams of well-trained health staff are important. Governments must focus on implementing policies to combat all forms of gender-based violence, domestic violence, cyber violence, femicide, female genital mutilation, human trafficking and other harmful practices.

The ratification and implementation of existing comprehensive international legal frameworks such as the Istanbul Convention, and International Labor Organization Convention No. 190, adoption of domestic non-discrimination legislations, preparing comprehensive national action plans on violence against women and gender equality, trainings and awareness-raising including men and boys, the adoption of an intersectional approach, ensuring confidentiality of the proceedings, and addressing the data gap on violence against women are crucial.

Human trafficking, as a subsection of violence against women in the Beijing Platform for Action, remains a prevailing issue within the region. Governments must take the appropriate measures to guarantee the support and protection of victims of trafficking, including trafficking for the purpose of exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation.

### **Women's political participation**

Women's political participation can be ensured through two areas: promotion and protection. States must introduce, where not present, and implement in full, affirmative measures in legislation and regulations (also within political parties) to ensure parity and equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making. These measures must include sanctions for non-compliance. Importantly, women and girls active in political life must be protected against all forms of violence, abuse, and sexism.

### **Tax justice**

As for tax justice, we need to raise tax revenues through progressive taxes with a bottom up perspective to redistribute wealth and power which would automatically contribute to gender equality. We also need better, comprehensive macro policies to tackle tax evasion and tax avoidance to establish financial justice.

### **Women in the media**

Regarding women in the media, comprehensive legislations, regulations, and mechanisms (not only by States but also through codes of conducts by multinational media corporations) are needed to promote gender balance in media decision-making at all levels, and to tackle online harassment, gender bias and implicit discrimination in Artificial Intelligence, algorithms, and Automated Decision-Making, as well as to combat the impunity of social media corporations and advertisement sectors. We need to ensure digital and media literacy for all, so that women can use digital media as an educational tool and to transition from passive consumers to active content creators.

## **3. Areas that need more focus & how to pave the way forward in the Beijing+25 process**

### **Accountability and monitoring**

There is a need for substantive protection frameworks (with enforcement authority) and resources to reduce the obstacles and risks women and women's NGOs face due to increasing governmental threats, violence, and structural inequalities. Existing accountability bodies are not responsive to women's human rights, and women and women's NGOs all around the world do not have a truly 'Independent Body' that they can appeal to, expect fair decisions from and interventions for improvements of their lives. We need a Global Independent Women's Body to which women can appeal to without any barriers, which has independent investigative, decision making, and enforcement powers, to demand accountability and reparations from those that commit gender-based crimes.

### **Sexual reproductive health and rights**

Growing opposition or roll-back to sexual and reproductive rights is of grave concern in the region, fueled by the harmful gender norms, stereotypes, assumptions and stigma that undermine women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. States must mainstream mandatory, age-responsive, standardised, evidence-based and scientifically accurate comprehensive sexuality education curricula across the education system including into ordinary school curricula. Abortion laws must be brought into line with human rights standards making them safe and legal. All barriers to accessing sexual reproductive health services for women, including legal status, migrant status, among others, must be removed, and women must be freed from all stigma and discrimination related to their choices around their sexuality and respected for exercising their right to bodily autonomy. Moreover, States must provide a full range of health services to all women, including those who are sex workers, that are confidential, non-conditional, free from violence, stigma and discrimination, and that respond to and recognize their diverse identities, experiences, working conditions, and needs.

### **Peace and security and displaced women**

Regarding peace, security and displaced women, we need to clarify that peace is not possible without meaningful and equal participation of women, CSOs, displaced groups, and former combatants. We demand the expansion of the definition of security to include and focus on human security, with categories such as environmental and food security, political security, community and personal security. We also demand effective systems of early warning, conflict prevention, mitigation, and security for those who promote the peace agenda in their countries and communities.

### **Women labour movements**

Regarding Trade unions and women's labour movements, the ILO Convention 190 and accompanying Recommendation 106 on violence and harassment at the workplace must be ratified urgently, with a particular focus on sectors which are more exposed to violence against women such as care, domestic work, media, and informal work. Over-representation of women in precarious employment, low wage employment, and the informal economy must

be addressed by ensuring universal access to a living wage and social protection, a global care crisis must be averted by committing a minimum of 2% of income to public care services.

### **Education, Knowledge Transfer and Access to Technologies**

We call on governments to ensure free quality education that is well resourced and accessible for all throughout early childhood to further, higher, technical, and vocational education. It is important to have an educational paradigm which focuses on global citizenship, that is inclusive of peace and reconciliation, human rights, trauma-informed education, community development processes, and includes comprehensive sexuality education.

### **Financing for Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action**

In order to move forward in Beijing +25 and the implementation of BPfA, we need more than speeches and commitments, we need financing. Legal reforms should be enacted to ensure obligatory, transparent, and accountable budget allocations for the effective implementation of commitments on women's rights and gender equality, supported by monitoring and gender-segregated financial data.

### **Corporate and Institutional Accountability to the Beijing+25 Process**

A core part of the way forward in the Beijing +25 process is corporate and institutional accountability. UN Women should actively hold corporations accountable for gender equality issues and the gendered impact of their operations. The collective efforts and negotiations for the draft UN binding treaty on business and human rights should accelerate, with a focus on gender-impact assessment and due diligence, gender-sensitive remedies and justice mechanisms, and creating an enabling environment for women human rights defenders.