

Commission on the Status of Women, 49th Session

Statement by

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Madam Chair, fellow delegates,

Ten years ago we adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in order to promote gender equality, development and peace. The action plan has been an important tool and reference document for improving gender equality in Norway. It was Beijing that inspired us to make a comprehensive survey of women's health in Norway. Beijing has also helped to identify the challenges we are facing. The most important ones are related to the business sector and to gender-based violence.

Our experience is that targeted measures and positive action can be effective in combating gender segregation. I would like to mention two examples of what we are doing in Norway:

- Firstly, we are determined to end the almost total male dominance in large Norwegian companies. By this June, the 560 public limited companies in Norway will have to have 40 per cent representation of either sex on their boards. If this is not done voluntarily the companies will be legally obliged to do so within a two-year period.
- Secondly, we are working to enhance men's role as care providers. Twelve years ago Norway established a four-week parental leave for fathers. The Norwegian parliament has now decided to extend this period and to continue to focus on the role of men in caring for their children.

Although most women in Norway enjoy equal rights to an increasing extent, we need to address the issues of inter-sectionality and multiple discrimination. Disabled people, lesbians and ethnic minorities are vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination and to violence. We are updating our gender equality policy to take account of discrimination based on the intersection of gender and other axes of discrimination.

My government also sees a need to focus on gender equality within the family. Men's cooperation and a change in men's role in the family, are necessary to achieve gender equality. We therefore need to develop more knowledge of men and their lives as a gendered experience.

Madam Chair,

Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action there has been more emphasis on women's role in relation to conflict. It is five years since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Are we making full use of this instrument? There has been some progress but not nearly enough. It is time to evaluate how the resolution is being implemented.

Women's equal and active participation is vital for democracy and peace. Norway promotes and safeguards the full participation of women in conflict resolution and peace-building. Recently Norway hosted a conference where women from a wide range of organisations and districts in Southern Sudan could voice their priorities for sustainable peace in their country. Norway will continue to give priority to initiatives that makes women's voices and demands heard. Women cannot and should not be excluded when decisions involving their future is being made.

Madam Chair,

Women's participation is also essential in the fight against poverty and efforts to ensure sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved without confronting gender inequality.

This year not only marks the tenth anniversary of Beijing but is also the year for the review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). As Norway remains committed to Beijing and the Platform for Action we support the strong focus in the Millennium Project Report on the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights in achieving these goals. The Millennium Development Goals cannot be attained unless progress is made on achieving the goals from the UN Conference on Population in Cairo.

Madam Chair,

The Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) must be the touchstone of our efforts to realise the Millennium Development Goals. By using these instruments as a basis for understanding and addressing the gender equality dimensions of the MDGs, we can greatly improve the effectiveness of our development efforts.

Madam Chair,

I would like to finish by strongly encouraging all states with reservations to CEDAW to withdraw them, and to ensure women their human rights.

Thank you for your attention.