



**Statement delivered by**

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**(Check against delivery)**



Madam Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Acceding Country Croatia<sup>1</sup>, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\* and Serbia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

Madam Chair,

Violence against women and girls is a worldwide phenomenon, crossing all borders, all generations, all nationalities, all communities and occurs in all spheres of our societies. This phenomenon remains far too hidden, under-reported, under-prosecuted, and under-punished. Any figure we put on the table will not reflect its genuine and alarming extent. Let's also admit it: we are not able yet to provide women and girls with the appropriate support and protection.

It is time to act. Back in 1995, we all committed to achieving the strategic objectives and actions set out in the Beijing Platform for Action. Almost two decades have passed. And yet, the Platform remains as powerful, as comprehensive, as forward-looking and as relevant as it was in 1995. We must accelerate progress towards the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and towards gender equality.

The EU reaffirms its strong support and commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, to its full and reinforced implementation, follow-up and regular monitoring.

We believe that the Commission of the Status of Women should continue to play a strong role in reviewing the steps taken for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and serve as a venue to exchange good practices in this regard.

We are fully committed to the effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and we urge all countries that have not yet done so to sign, ratify and fully implement the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

The EU reaffirms its strong support for, and commitment to, the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, as well as the key actions for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action agreed at ICPD+5 and the Copenhagen Declaration and Action Programme. The EU also emphasises that gender equality cannot be achieved without guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, and reaffirms that expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and health services are essential for achieving the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action and the MDG's

For its part, the EU reviews twice a year the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. In 2012, we monitored the area of Violence against Women with a focus on support services. A monitoring report covering the 27 EU Member States and Croatia was produced

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<sup>1</sup> *Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process*

by the European Institute for Gender Equality. Based on its findings, the Council of the European Union adopted specific conclusions acknowledging improvements, but also calling on both the EU institutions and the 27 Member States to accelerate progress, in terms of better coordination of the public support system, sustainable funding for specialised support services, targeted prevention programmes; systematic training for professionals dealing with victims and perpetrators, better data collection on violence against women at national and EU level.

**Madam Chair,**

We strongly condemn all forms of violence against women as violations of women's full enjoyment of human rights. Neither custom, tradition, culture, privacy, religion, nor so-called honour can be invoked to justify violence, or to avoid the obligations of States with respect to its prevention and elimination, and effective prosecution of perpetrators.

Standing by human rights defenders is a longstanding commitment of the EU's foreign policy. In line with the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, the EU is a staunch supporter of all those who relentlessly monitor the state of human rights and endeavour to address their violations. We pay particular tribute to the work of all the courageous individuals engaged in promoting the rights of women.

As we are witnessing increasing violence against human rights defenders, women defenders have been identified as one of those most risk at of suffering from violence, prejudice, exclusion compared to their male counterparts. We call upon States to take all the necessary measures to ensure the protection of human rights defenders, including improved training and awareness of state officials. The EU also stresses the need to take all appropriate measures to address the question of impunity for attacks, threats and acts of intimidation committed by State - and non-State actors, in particular in cases of gender-based violence.

The EU is committed to promote the role of women in peace and security, through the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions. Protection of women in conflict situations against violence, including sexual violence, and ending impunity remain our utmost priorities. We will continue to closely cooperate with the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms Zainab Bangura, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Ms Rashida Manjoo.

The EU welcomes the key role that UN Women plays in eliminating violence against women and girls through its programmes, technical assistance, advocacy and normative work, and also through its leadership and coordination of efforts across the UN. The EU and UN Women in 2012 signed a Memorandum of Understanding to foster policy dialogue and co-operation in several fields, including combating sexual and gender based violence. The EU also supports the UN Women COMMIT initiative.

**Madam Chair,**

Violence against women is certainly the most brutal manifestation of discrimination. It is intrinsically rooted in the structural inequalities and unequal power relationships between women and men. We urge all governments to promote gender equality and to break down gender roles and gender stereotypes in order to attain societies based on respect and non-violence.

The promotion of gender equality and the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by women and girls are EU goals. The EU has put in place comprehensive policies aimed at ensuring women an equal role and rights to participate in the political, economic and social life; at better reconciling family, professional and private life for both women and men, at achieving equal and genuine economic independence. Only by eliminating the root causes of inequalities, including the unequal share of power between women and men, can we successfully fight violence against women and girls.

The critical role of commitment and responsibility of men and boys is evident. We encourage them to play an active role in promoting gender equality and to speak out against violence against women.

**Madam Chair,**

The EU welcomes the call for a systematic and holistic approach and for the provision of a full range of multisectoral services in order to combat violence made in the reports of the Secretary-General.

We support the comprehensive approach of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The State has the primary responsibility for preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls. The 27 Member States of the EU have implemented encompassing and long-term strategies and action plans combining legislative, non-legislative measures, protecting victims and prosecuting the perpetrators. General and specialized support services have been put in place.

The EU supports its Member States in combating violence against women both at internal and external level. Key priorities are improving knowledge and data collection, awareness-raising, exchange of good practices, legislative action such as the EU legislation on human trafficking, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, on the rights and protection for all victims of crime, or the European Protection Order in civil matters currently in the pipeline.

We pay our tribute to the thousands of Civil Society Organisations who work worldwide daily to protect women's rights and to promote gender equality. The European Union supports approximately 200 projects and programmes worldwide on fostering women's rights in addition to the extensive support provided by each of our Member States individually. Over the last decade we have supported Civil Society Organisations and partner governments through the funding of 100 projects directly targeting violence against women and girls for a total of 80 million EUR. The EU Daphne Program finances civil society, universities and local authorities in their daily work to combat violence and support victims.

We are also firmly committed to support, with planned activities covering both the internal and external EU dimensions, the on-going global efforts in the eradication of female genital mutilation. We welcome the African Union leadership in this issue.

**Madam Chair,**

Gender equality and women's empowerment are an integral part of the MDGs. It is in fact, a condition for achieving all the MDGs. However, while progress has been significant in the area of primary education, results in the field of economic and political empowerment are less encouraging. We still need to remove persistent barriers to women's equal participation.

The goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women need to feature prominently in the discussions of the post-2015 development framework. Women across the globe would benefit from a new framework based on a rights-based approach to development; the elimination of inequalities and the promotion of gender equality; transparency; and the fight against corruption.

**Madam Chair,**

The European Union stands ready to contribute to an ambitious, strong, and forward-looking and action-oriented outcome of this session.

Let's work together to build a new momentum for the advancement of women's rights and gender equality worldwide. We owe this to women and men. We owe this to the millions of women and girls daily finding themselves victims of violence.

Thank you for your kind attention