

# ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

From the Beijing Platform for Action to the Sustainable Development Goals





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## From the Beijing Platform for Action to the Sustainable Development Goals

Ending Violence Against Women Policy Section  
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# INTRODUCTION

The following booklet contains relevant sections of the principal international agreements over the past twenty years where countries have committed to responding to violence against women and girls.

These include:

- Area D of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** (1995), a global policy framework and blueprint for action for the empowerment of women and girls;
- the **Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls**, adopted at its fifty-seventh session (2013); and
- the **Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly** (2015).

The booklet also provides a summary of the trends in national implementation of the Platform for Action, specifically in relation to one of the identified critical areas of concern, **violence against women**, as well as an overview of the role of UN Women in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular, the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and **SDG 5, “Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls.”**

A list of UN Women and other relevant documents relating to the Beijing Platform, with links to websites, is also included in the booklet.

# I. BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION\*

\* Adopted at the 16th plenary meeting, on 15 September 1995;

The Fourth World Conference on Women, Having met in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995,

**1. Adopts** the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which are annexed to the present resolution;

**2. Recommends** to the General Assembly of the United Nations at its fiftieth session that it endorse the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as adopted by the Conference.

## BEIJING DECLARATION

1. We, the Governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women,

2. Gathered here in Beijing in September 1995, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations,

3. Determined to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity,

4. Acknowledging the voices of all women everywhere and taking note of the diversity of women and their roles and circumstances, honouring the women who paved the way and inspired by the hope present in the world's youth,

5. Recognize that the status of women has advanced in some important respects in the past decade but that progress has been uneven, inequalities between women and men have persisted and major obstacles remain, with serious consequences for the well-being of all people,

6. Also recognize that this situation is exacerbated by the increasing poverty that is affecting the lives of the majority of the world's people, in particular women and children, with origins in both the national and international domains,

7. Dedicate ourselves unreservedly to addressing these constraints and obstacles and thus enhancing further the advancement and empowerment of women all over the world, and agree that this requires urgent action in the spirit of determination, hope, cooperation and solidarity, now and to carry us forward into the next century.

We reaffirm our commitment to:

8. The equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Right to Development;

9. Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;

10. Build on consensus and progress made at previous United Nations conferences and summits - on women in Nairobi in 1985, on children in New York in 1990, on environment and development in

Rio de Janeiro in 1992, on human rights in Vienna in 1993, on population and development in Cairo in 1994 and on social development in Copenhagen in 1995 with the objective of achieving equality, development and peace;

11. Achieve the full and effective implementation of the Nairobi Forwardlooking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;

12. The empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations.

We are convinced that:

13. Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace;

14. Women's rights are human rights;

15. Equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them are critical to their well-being and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy;

16. Eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centred sustainable development;

17. The explicit recognition and reaffirmation of the right of all women to control all aspects of their health, in particular their own fertility, is basic to their empowerment;

18. Local, national, regional and global peace is attainable and is inextricably linked with the advancement of women, who are a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels;

19. It is essential to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes, including development policies and programmes, at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women;

20. The participation and contribution of all actors of civil society, particularly women's groups and networks and other non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, in cooperation with Governments, are important to the effective implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action;

21. The implementation of the Platform for Action requires commitment from Governments and the international community. By making national and international commitments for action, including those made at the Conference, Governments and the international community recognize the need to take priority action for the empowerment and advancement of women.

We are determined to:

22. Intensify efforts and actions to achieve the goals of the Nairobi Forwardlooking Strategies for the Advancement of Women by the end of this century;

23. Ensure the full enjoyment by women and the girl child of all human rights and fundamental

freedoms and take effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms;

24. Take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child and remove all obstacles to gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women;

25. Encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality;

26. Promote women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services;

27. Promote people-centred sustainable development, including sustained economic growth, through the provision of basic education, life-long education, literacy and training, and primary health care for girls and women;

28. Take positive steps to ensure peace for the advancement of women and, recognizing the leading role that women have played in the peace movement, work actively towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, and support negotiations on the conclusion, without delay, of a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects;

29. Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;

30. Ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education and health care and enhance women's sexual and reproductive health as well as education;

31. Promote and protect all human rights of women and girls;

32. Intensify efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people;

33. Ensure respect for international law, including humanitarian law, in order to protect women and girls in particular;

34. Develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages, ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all and enhance their role in the development process.

We are determined to:

35. Ensure women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including through the enhancement of their capacities to enjoy the benefits of equal access to these resources, inter alia, by means of international cooperation;

36. Ensure the success of the Platform for Action, which will require a strong commitment on the part of Governments, international organizations and institutions at all levels. We are deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, which is the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Equitable social development that recognizes empowering the poor, particularly women living in poverty, to utilize environmental resources sustainably is a necessary foundation for sustainable development. We also recognize



that broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice. The success of the Platform for Action will also require adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources for the advancement of women; financial resources to strengthen the capacity of national, subregional, regional and international institutions; a commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in all national, regional and international bodies and policy-making processes; and the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels for accountability to the world's women;

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

### AREA D: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

112. Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The long-standing failure to protect and promote those rights and freedoms in the case of violence against women is a matter of concern to all States and should be addressed. Knowledge about its causes and consequences, as well as its incidence and measures to combat it, have been greatly expanded since the Nairobi Conference. In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture. The low social and economic status of women can be both a cause and a consequence of violence against women.

113. The term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or

37. Ensure also the success of the Platform for Action in countries with economies in transition, which will require continued international cooperation and assistance;

38. We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the following Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all our policies and programmes. We urge the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant regional and international institutions and all women and men, as well as non-governmental organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, and all sectors of civil society, in cooperation with Governments, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of this Platform for Action.

is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following:

- (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

- (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

114. Other acts of violence against women include violation of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict, in particular murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy.

115. Acts of violence against women also include forced sterilization and forced abortion, coercive/forced use of contraceptives, female infanticide and prenatal sex selection.

116. Some groups of women, such as women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, women migrants, including women migrant workers, women in poverty living in rural or remote communities, destitute women, women in institutions or in detention, female children, women with disabilities, elderly women, displaced women, repatriated women, women living in poverty and women in situations of armed conflict, foreign occupation, wars of aggression, civil wars, terrorism, including hostage-taking, are also particularly vulnerable to violence.

117. Acts or threats of violence, whether occurring within the home or in the community, or perpetrated or condoned by the State, instil fear and insecurity in women's lives and are obstacles to the achievement of equality and for development and peace. The fear of violence, including harassment, is a permanent constraint on the mobility of women and limits their access to resources and basic activities. High social, health and economic costs to the individual and society are associated with violence against women. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. In many cases, violence against women and girls occurs in the family or within the home, where violence is often tolerated. The neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and rape of girl children and women by family members and other members of the household, as well as incidences of spousal and non-spousal

abuse, often go unreported and are thus difficult to detect. Even when such violence is reported, there is often a failure to protect victims or punish perpetrators.

118. Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement. Violence against women throughout the life cycle derives essentially from cultural patterns, in particular the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices and all acts of extremism linked to race, sex, language or religion that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family, the workplace, the community and society. Violence against women is exacerbated by social pressures, notably the shame of denouncing certain acts that have been perpetrated against women; women's lack of access to legal information, aid or protection; the lack of laws that effectively prohibit violence against women; failure to reform existing laws; inadequate efforts on the part of public authorities to promote awareness of and enforce existing laws; and the absence of educational and other means to address the causes and consequences of violence. Images in the media of violence against women, in particular those that depict rape or sexual slavery as well as the use of women and girls as sex objects, including pornography, are factors contributing to the continued prevalence of such violence, adversely influencing the community at large, in particular children and young people.

119. Developing a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to the challenging task of promoting families, communities and States that are free of violence against women is necessary and achievable. Equality, partnership between women and men and respect for human dignity must permeate all stages of the socialization process. Educational systems should promote self-respect, mutual respect, and cooperation between women and men.

120. The absence of adequate gender-disaggregated data and statistics on the incidence of violence makes the elaboration of programmes and monitoring of changes difficult. Lack of or inadequate documentation and research on domestic violence, sexual harassment and violence against women and girls in private and in public, including the workplace, impede efforts to design specific intervention strategies. Experience in a number of countries shows that women and men can be mobilized to overcome violence in all its forms and that effective public measures can be taken to address both the causes and the consequences of violence. Men's groups mobilizing against gender violence are necessary allies for change.

121. Women may be vulnerable to violence perpetrated by persons in positions of authority in both conflict and non-conflict situations. Training of all officials in humanitarian and human rights law and the punishment of perpetrators of violent acts against women would help to ensure that such violence does not take place at the hands of public officials in whom women should be able to place trust, including police and prison officials and security forces.

122. The effective suppression of trafficking in women and girls for the sex trade is a matter of pressing international concern. Implementation of the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, 20/ as well as other relevant instruments, needs to be reviewed and strengthened. The use of women in international prostitution and trafficking networks has become a major focus of international organized crime. The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, who has explored these acts as an additional cause of the violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, is invited to address, within her mandate and as a matter of urgency, the issue of international trafficking for the purposes of the sex trade, as well as the issues of forced prostitution, rape, sexual abuse and sex

tourism. Women and girls who are victims of this international trade are at an increased risk of further violence, as well as unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection, including infection with HIV/AIDS.

123. In addressing violence against women, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken an analysis may be made of their effects on women and men, respectively.

#### **Strategic objective D.1. Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women**

##### **Actions to be taken**

124. By Governments:

- (a) Condemn violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women;
- (b) Refrain from engaging in violence against women and exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons;
- (c) Enact and/or reinforce penal, civil, labour and administrative sanctions in domestic legislation to punish and redress the wrongs done to women and girls who are subjected to any form of violence, whether in the home, the workplace, the community or society;
- (d) Adopt and/or implement and periodically review and analyse legislation to ensure its effectiveness in eliminating violence against women, emphasizing the prevention of violence and the prosecution of offenders; take measures to ensure the protection of women subjected to violence, access to just and

- effective remedies, including compensation and indemnification and healing of victims, and rehabilitation of perpetrators;
- (e) Work actively to ratify and/or implement international human rights norms and instruments as they relate to violence against women, including those contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 21/ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 13/ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 13/ and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; 22/
  - (f) Implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, taking into account general recommendation 19, adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its eleventh session; 23/
  - (g) Promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes related to violence against women; actively encourage, support and implement measures and programmes aimed at increasing the knowledge and understanding of the causes, consequences and mechanisms of violence against women among those responsible for implementing these policies, such as law enforcement officers, police personnel and judicial, medical and social workers, as well as those who deal with minority, migration and refugee issues, and develop strategies to ensure that the revictimization of women victims of violence does not occur because of gender-insensitive laws or judicial or enforcement practices;
  - (h) Provide women who are subjected to violence with access to the mechanisms of justice and, as provided for by national legislation, to just and effective remedies for the harm they have suffered and inform women of their rights in seeking redress through such mechanisms;
  - (i) Enact and enforce legislation against the perpetrators of practices and acts of violence against women, such as female genital mutilation, female infanticide, prenatal sex selection and dowry-related violence, and give vigorous support to the efforts of non-governmental and community organizations to eliminate such practices;
  - (j) Formulate and implement, at all appropriate levels, plans of action to eliminate violence against women;
  - (k) Adopt all appropriate measures, especially in the field of education, to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, and to eliminate prejudices, customary practices and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes and on stereotyped roles for men and women;
  - (l) Create or strengthen institutional mechanisms so that women and girls can report acts of violence against them in a safe and confidential environment, free from the fear of penalties or retaliation, and file charges;
  - (m) Ensure that women with disabilities have access to information and services in the field of violence against women;
  - (n) Create, improve or develop as appropriate, and fund the training programmes for judicial, legal, medical, social, educational and police and immigrant personnel, in order to avoid the abuse of power leading to violence against women and sensitize such personnel to the nature of gender-based acts and threats of violence so that fair treatment of female victims can be assured;
  - (o) Adopt laws, where necessary, and reinforce existing laws that punish police, security forces or any other agents of the State who engage in acts of violence against women in the course of the performance of their duties; review existing legislation and take effective measures against the perpetrators of such violence;

- (p) Allocate adequate resources within the government budget and mobilize community resources for activities related to the elimination of violence against women, including resources for the implementation of plans of action at all appropriate levels;
- (q) Include in reports submitted in accordance with the provisions of relevant United Nations human rights instruments, information pertaining to violence against women and measures taken to implement the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women;
- (r) Cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women in the performance of her mandate and furnish all information requested; cooperate also with other competent mechanisms, such as the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on torture and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on summary, extrajudiciary and arbitrary executions, in relation to violence against women;
- (s) Recommend that the Commission on Human Rights renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women when her term ends in 1997 and, if warranted, to update and strengthen it.

125. By Governments, including local governments, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, the public and private sectors, particularly enterprises, and the mass media, as appropriate:

- (a) Provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence, as well as medical, psychological and other counselling services and free or low-cost legal aid, where it is needed, as well as appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence;
- (b) Establish linguistically and culturally accessible services for migrant women and girls, including women migrant workers, who are victims of gender-based violence;
- (c) Recognize the vulnerability to violence and other forms of abuse of women migrants, including women migrant workers, whose legal status in the host country depends on employers who may exploit their situation;
- (d) Support initiatives of women's organizations and non-governmental organizations all over the world to raise awareness on the issue of violence against women and to contribute to its elimination;
- (e) Organize, support and fund community-based education and training campaigns to raise awareness about violence against women as a violation of women's enjoyment of their human rights and mobilize local communities to use appropriate gender-sensitive traditional and innovative methods of conflict resolution;
- (f) Recognize, support and promote the fundamental role of intermediate institutions, such as primary health-care centres, family-planning centres, existing school health services, mother and baby protection services, centres for migrant families and so forth in the field of information and education related to abuse;
- (g) Organize and fund information campaigns and educational and training programmes in order to sensitize girls and boys and women and men to the personal and social detrimental effects of violence in the family, community and society; teach them how to communicate without violence and promote training for victims and potential victims so that they can protect themselves and others against such violence;
- (h) Disseminate information on the assistance available to women and families who are victims of violence;
- (i) Provide, fund and encourage counselling and rehabilitation programmes for the perpetrators of violence and promote research to

further efforts concerning such counselling and rehabilitation so as to prevent the recurrence of such violence;

- (j) Raise awareness of the responsibility of the media in promoting non-stereotyped images of women and men, as well as in eliminating patterns of media presentation that generate violence, and encourage those responsible for media content to establish professional guidelines and codes of conduct; also raise awareness of the important role of the media in informing and educating people about the causes and effects of violence against women and in stimulating public debate on the topic.

126. By Governments, employers, trade unions, community and youth organizations and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate:

- (a) Develop programmes and procedures to eliminate sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in all educational institutions, workplaces and elsewhere;
- (b) Develop programmes and procedures to educate and raise awareness of acts of violence against women that constitute a crime and a violation of the human rights of women;
- (c) Develop counselling, healing and support programmes for girls, adolescents and young women who have been or are involved in abusive relationships, particularly those who live in homes or institutions where abuse occurs;
- (d) Take special measures to eliminate violence against women, particularly those in vulnerable situations, such as young women, refugee, displaced and internally displaced women, women with disabilities and women migrant workers, including enforcing any existing legislation and developing, as appropriate, new legislation for women migrant workers in both sending and receiving countries.

127. By the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

Provide the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women with

all necessary assistance, in particular the staff and resources required to perform all mandated functions, especially in carrying out and following up on missions undertaken either separately or jointly with other special rapporteurs and working groups, and adequate assistance for periodic consultations with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and all treaty bodies.

128. By Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations:

Encourage the dissemination and implementation of the UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women and the UNHCR Guidelines on the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence against Refugees.

### **Strategic objective D.2. Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures**

#### **Actions to be taken**

129. By Governments, regional organizations, the United Nations, other international organizations, research institutions, women's and youth organizations and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate:

- (a) Promote research, collect data and compile statistics, especially concerning domestic violence relating to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women, and encourage research into the causes, nature, seriousness and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and redress violence against women;
- (b) Disseminate findings of research and studies widely;
- (c) Support and initiate research on the impact of violence, such as rape, on women and girl children, and make the resulting information and statistics available to the public;



- (d) Encourage the media to examine the impact of gender role stereotypes, including those perpetuated by commercial advertisements which foster gender-based violence and inequalities, and how they are transmitted during the life cycle, and take measures to eliminate these negative images with a view to promoting a violence-free society.

**Strategic objective D.3. Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking**

**Actions to be taken**

130. By Governments of countries of origin, transit and destination, regional and international organizations, as appropriate:

- (a) Consider the ratification and enforcement of international conventions on trafficking in persons and on slavery;
- (b) Take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors, that encourage trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex, forced marriages and forced labour in order to eliminate trafficking in women, including by strengthening existing legislation

with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and to punishing the perpetrators, through both criminal and civil measures;

- (c) Step up cooperation and concerted action by all relevant law enforcement authorities and institutions with a view to dismantling national, regional and international networks in trafficking;
- (d) Allocate resources to provide comprehensive programmes designed to heal and rehabilitate into society victims of trafficking, including through job training, legal assistance and confidential health care, and take measures to cooperate with non-governmental organizations to provide for the social, medical and psychological care of the victims of trafficking;
- (e) Develop educational and training programmes and policies and consider enacting legislation aimed at preventing sex tourism and trafficking, giving special emphasis to the protection of young women and children.

## II. 2013 COMMISSION OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN AGREED CONCLUSIONS

### THE ELIMINATION AND PREVENTION OF ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the declarations adopted by the Commission on the occasion of the tenth and fifteenth anniversaries of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

2. The Commission also reaffirms the international commitments made at relevant United Nations summits and conferences in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women, including in the Programme of Action at the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation.

3. The Commission reaffirms that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as other relevant conventions and treaties, provide an international legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for the elimination and prevention of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, as a cross-cutting issue addressed in different international instruments.

4. The Commission recalls the rules of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977.

5. The Commission recalls the inclusion of gender-related crimes and crimes of sexual violence in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as the recognition by the ad hoc international criminal tribunals that rape and other forms

of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide or torture.

6. The Commission acknowledges also the important role in the prevention and elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls played by regional conventions, instruments and initiatives and their follow-up mechanisms, in respective regions and countries.

7. The Commission reaffirms the commitment to the full and effective implementation of and follow-up to all relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, in particular the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. It also reaffirms its previous agreed conclusions on violence against women (1998) and on elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child (2007).

8. The Commission recalls Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, 1820 (2008) of 19 June 2008, 1888 (2009) of 30 September 2009, 1889 (2009) of 5 October 2009 and 1960 (2010) of 16 December 2010 on women and peace and security and all relevant Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, including resolutions 1882 (2009) of 4 August 2009 and 1998 (2011) of 12 July 2011 on armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

9. The Commission also recalls Human Rights Council resolutions 17/11 of 17 June 2011 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence



against women: ensuring due diligence in protection, 20/6 of 5 July 2012 on the elimination of discrimination against women and 20/12 of 5 July 2012 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: remedies for women who have been subjected to violence.

10. The Commission affirms that violence against women and girls is rooted in historical and structural inequality in power relations between women and men, and persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation of the enjoyment of human rights. Gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Violence against women and girls is characterized by the use and abuse of power and control in public and private spheres, and is intrinsically linked with gender stereotypes that underlie and perpetuate such violence, as well as other factors that can increase women's and girls' vulnerability to such violence.

11. The Commission stresses that "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. The Commission also notes the economic and social harm caused by such violence.

12. The Commission strongly condemns all forms of violence against women and girls. It recognizes their different forms and manifestations, in different contexts, settings, circumstances and relationships, and that domestic violence remains the most prevalent form that affects women of all social strata across the world. It also notes that women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination are exposed to increased risk of violence.

13. The Commission urges States to strongly condemn violence against women and girls committed in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, and recognizes that sexual and gender-based violence affects victims and survivors, families, communities and societies, and calls for effective measures of accountability and redress as well as effective remedies.

14. The Commission urges States to strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and girls and to refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

15. The Commission recognizes that all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated and that the international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis, and stresses that, while the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

16. The Commission stresses that all States have the obligation, at all levels, to use all appropriate means of a legislative, political, economic, social and administrative nature in order to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, and must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls and end impunity, and to provide protection as well as access to appropriate remedies for victims and survivors.

17. The Commission stresses that the right to education is a human right, and that eliminating illiteracy, ensuring equal access to education, in particular in rural and remote areas, and closing

the gender gap at all levels of education empowers women and girls and thereby contributes to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

18. The Commission reaffirms that women and men have the right to enjoy, on an equal basis, all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. It urges States to prevent all violations of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls and to devote particular attention to abolishing practices and legislation that discriminate against women and girls, or perpetuate and condone violence against them.

19. The Commission stresses that the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women, including women's economic empowerment and full and equal access to resources, and their full integration into the formal economy, in particular in economic decision-making, as well as their full and equal participation in public and political life, is essential for addressing the structural and underlying causes of violence against women and girls.

20. The Commission also recognizes the persistence of obstacles that remain for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, and that the prevention of and response to such violence require States to act, at all levels, at each and every opportunity in a comprehensive and holistic manner that recognizes the linkages between violence against women and girls and other issues, such as education, health, HIV and AIDS, poverty eradication, food security, peace and security, humanitarian assistance and crime prevention.

21. The Commission recognizes that women's poverty and lack of empowerment, as well as their marginalization resulting from their exclusion from social and economic policies and from the benefits of education and sustainable development, can place them at increased risk of violence, and that violence against women impedes the social

and economic development of communities and States, as well as the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

22. The Commission recognizes that violence against women has both short- and long-term adverse consequences on their health, including their sexual and reproductive health, and the enjoyment of their human rights, and that respecting and promoting sexual and reproductive health, and protecting and fulfilling reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences, is a necessary condition to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in order to enable them to enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to prevent and mitigate violence against women.

23. The Commission expresses deep concern about violence against women and girls in public spaces, including sexual harassment, especially when it is being used to intimidate women and girls who are exercising any of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

24. The Commission expresses concern about violent gender-related killings of women and girls, while recognizing efforts made to address this form of violence in different regions, including in countries where the concept of femicide or feminicide has been incorporated in national legislation.

25. The Commission recognizes that the illicit use of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons aggravates violence, inter alia, against women and girls.

26. The Commission recognizes the vulnerability of older women and the particular risk of violence they face, and stresses the urgent need to address violence and discrimination against them,

especially in the light of the growing proportion of older people in the world's population.

27. The Commission reaffirms that indigenous women often suffer multiple forms of discrimination and poverty which increase their vulnerability to all forms of violence; and stresses the need to seriously address violence against indigenous women and girls.

28. The Commission recognizes the important role of the community, in particular men and boys, as well as civil society, in particular women's and youth organizations, in the efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

29. The Commission acknowledges the strategic and coordinating role of national machineries for the advancement of women, which should be placed at the highest possible level in government, for the elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls, and the need to endow these machineries with the necessary human and sufficient financial resources to enable them to function effectively. The Commission also acknowledges the contribution of national human rights institutions where they exist.

30. The Commission recognizes the important role of the United Nations system, in particular of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in addressing discrimination and violence against women and girls at the global, regional and national levels and in assisting States, upon their request, in their efforts to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls.

31. The Commission stresses the importance of data collection on the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls, and in that regard takes note of the work of the Statistical Commission towards a set of indicators on violence against women.

32. The Commission welcomes the progress made in addressing violence against women and girls such as the adoption of relevant laws and policies, the implementation of preventive measures, the establishment of protection and appropriate support services for victims and survivors and improvement in data collection, analysis and research. In this regard, the Commission welcomes the contributions and participation of governments, at all levels, and all relevant stakeholders in efforts to address violence against women and girls in a holistic manner.

33. The Commission recognizes that despite progress made, significant gaps and challenges remain in fulfilling commitments and bridging the implementation gap in addressing the scourge of violence against women and girls. The Commission is in particular concerned about: insufficient gender-sensitive policies; inadequate implementation of legal and policy frameworks; inadequate collection of data, analysis and research; lack of financial and human resources and insufficient allocation of such resources; and existing efforts not always being comprehensive, coordinated, consistent, sustained, transparent and adequately monitored and evaluated.

34. The commission urges governments, at all levels, and as appropriate, with the relevant entities of the United nations system, international and regional organizations, within their respective mandates and bearing in mind national priorities, and invites national human rights institutions where they exist, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector, employer organizations, trade unions, media and other relevant actors, as applicable, to take the following actions:

#### **A. Strengthening implementation of legal and policy frameworks and accountability**

- (a) Consider ratifying or acceding to, as a particular matter of priority, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

- against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their respective Optional Protocols, limit the extent of any reservations, formulate any such reservations as precisely and as narrowly as possible in order to ensure that no reservations are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Conventions, review their reservations regularly with a view to withdrawing them and withdraw reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of the relevant treaty; and implement them fully by, inter alia, putting in place effective national legislation and policies, and encourages State parties in their reporting to relevant treaty bodies to include requested information on measures to address violence against women and girls;
- (b) Encourage the use of all relevant sources of international law, international guidelines and best practices regarding protection of victims and survivors to combat violence against women and girls;
  - (c) Adopt, as appropriate, review, and ensure the accelerated and effective implementation of laws and comprehensive measures that criminalize violence against women and girls and that provide for multidisciplinary and gender-sensitive preventive and protective measures, such as emergency barring orders and protection orders, the investigation, submission for prosecution and appropriate punishment of perpetrators to end impunity, support services that empower victims and survivors, as well as access to appropriate civil remedies and redress;
  - (d) Address and eliminate, as a matter of priority, domestic violence through adopting, strengthening and implementing legislation that prohibits such violence, prescribes punitive measures and establishes adequate legal protection against such violence;
  - (e) Strengthen national legislation, where appropriate, to punish violent gender-related killings of women and girls, and integrate specific mechanisms or policies to prevent, investigate and eradicate such deplorable forms of gender-based violence;
  - (f) Ensure women's and girls' unimpeded access to justice and to effective legal assistance so that they can make informed decisions regarding, inter alia, legal proceedings and issues relating to family law and criminal law, and also ensure that they have access to just and effective remedies for the harm that they have suffered, including through the adoption of national legislation where necessary;
  - (g) Take the necessary legislative and/or other measures to prohibit compulsory and forced alternative dispute resolution processes, including forced mediation and conciliation, in relation to all forms of violence against women and girls;
  - (h) Review and where appropriate, revise, amend or abolish all laws, regulations, policies, practices and customs that discriminate against women or have a discriminatory impact on women, and ensure that the provisions of multiple legal systems, where they exist, comply with international human rights obligations, commitments and principles, including the principle of non-discrimination;
  - (i) Mainstream a gender perspective into all legislation, policies and programmes, and allocate adequate financial and human resources, including through the expanded use of gender-responsive planning and budgeting, taking into account the needs and circumstances of women and girls, including victims and survivors of violence, for the development, adoption and full implementation of relevant laws, policies and programmes to address discrimination and violence against women and girls and for support to women's organizations;

- (j) Increase the investment in gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, taking into account the diversity of needs and circumstances of women and girls including victims and survivors of violence, including through mainstreaming a gender perspective in resource allocation and ensuring the necessary human, financial and material resources for specific targeted activities to ensure gender equality at the local, national, regional and international levels, as well through enhanced and increased international cooperation;
- (k) Develop and implement effective multisectoral national policies, strategies and programmes, with the full and effective participation of women and girls, which include measures for prevention, protection and support services and responses; data collection, research, monitoring and evaluation; the establishment of coordination mechanisms; allocation of adequate financial and human resources; independent national monitoring and accountability mechanisms; and clear timelines and national benchmarks for results to be achieved;
- (l) Ensure that in armed conflict and post-conflict situations the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, are prioritized and effectively addressed, including as appropriate through the investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators to end impunity, removal of barriers to women's access to justice, the establishment of complaint and reporting mechanisms, the provision of support to victims and survivors, affordable and accessible health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and reintegration measures; and take steps to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes and post-conflict decision-making;
- (m) Ensure accountability for the killing, maiming and targeting of women and girls and crimes of sexual violence, as prohibited under international law, stressing the need for the exclusion of such crimes from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution processes, and address such acts in all stages of the armed-conflict and post-conflict resolution process, including through transitional justice mechanisms, while taking steps to ensure the full and effective participation of women in such processes;
- (n) End impunity by ensuring accountability and punishing perpetrators of the most serious crimes against women and girls under national and international law, and stressing the need for the alleged perpetrators of those crimes to be held accountable under national justice or, where applicable, international justice;
- (o) Take effective steps to ensure the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of political life, political reform and at all levels of decision-making, in all situations, and to contribute to the prevention and the elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls;
- (p) Underline commitments to strengthen national efforts, including with the support of international cooperation, aimed at addressing the rights and needs of women and girls affected by natural disasters, armed conflicts, other complex humanitarian emergencies, trafficking in persons and terrorism, within the context of actions geared to addressing and eliminating violence against women and girls and the realization of the internationally agreed goals and commitments related to gender equality and the empowerment of women, including the Millennium Development Goals; and also underline the need to take concerted actions in conformity with international law to remove the obstacles to

the full realization of the rights of women and girls living under foreign occupation, so as to ensure the achievement of the above-mentioned goals and commitments;

- (q) Ensure that the specific needs of women and girls are incorporated into the planning, delivery and monitoring of, and infrastructure for, disaster risk reduction programmes and protocols and humanitarian assistance to address natural disasters, including those induced by climate change such as extreme weather events and slow onset impacts, with their full participation, and that in disaster preparedness efforts and in post-disaster settings, the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, are prioritized and adequately addressed;
- (r) Address violence against women and girls resulting from transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons and drug trafficking, and adopt specific policies to prevent and eradicate violence against women in crime prevention strategies;
- (s) Strengthen bilateral, regional and international cooperation, by consolidating existing mechanisms and developing new initiatives consistent with the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and by implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons;
- (t) Take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors, that contribute to trafficking in women and girls; prevent, combat and eliminate trafficking in women and girls by criminalizing all forms of trafficking in persons, in particular for the purpose of sexual and economic exploitation, as well as by strengthening existing civil and criminal legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and by bringing to justice and punishing the offenders and intermediaries involved, including public officials, by protecting the rights of trafficked persons and preventing revictimization; take appropriate measures to ensure that identified victims of trafficking in persons are not penalized for having been trafficked; provide identified victims of trafficking appropriate protection and care, such as rehabilitation and reintegration in society, witness protection, job training, legal assistance, confidential health care and repatriation with the informed consent of the trafficked person, regardless of their participation in any legal proceeding; and accelerate public awareness, education and training to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation;
- (u) Strengthen international cooperation, including through the fulfilment of international official development assistance commitments, that supports multisectoral policies, strategies, programmes and best practices, in accordance with national priorities aimed at achieving sustainable development and the realization of the empowerment of women, particularly towards ending violence against women and girls and promoting gender equality;
- (v) Encourage private sector investment in programmes, campaigns and strategies to respond to, prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment at the workplace, and to empower victims and survivors of violence;
- (w) Adopt and fund policy reforms and programmes, and support education, in order to sensitize, train and strengthen the capacity of public officials and professionals, including the judiciary, police and military, as well as those working in the areas of education, health, so-

cial welfare, justice, defence and immigration; and hold public officials accountable for not complying with laws and regulations relating to violence against women and girls, in order to prevent and respond to such violence in a gender-sensitive manner, end impunity and avoid the abuse of power leading to violence against women and the revictimization of victims and survivors;

- (x) Prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women and girls that are perpetrated by people in positions of authority, such as teachers, religious leaders, political leaders and law enforcement officials, in order to end impunity for these crimes;
- (y) Create and enhance a supportive environment for increased consultation and participation among all relevant stakeholders in efforts to address violence against women and girls, especially organizations working at the community level, in order to promote the empowerment of women and girls, as well as victims and survivors, so they can become agents of change and their knowledge and experience can contribute to the elaboration of policies and programmes;
- (z) Support and protect those who are committed to eliminating violence against women, including women human rights defenders in this regard, who face particular risks of violence;
- (aa) Take appropriate measures to ensure the human rights and protection of women and girls deprived of their liberty and/or under State custody or State care from all forms of violence, in particular sexual abuse;
- (bb) Adopt a life-cycle approach in efforts to end discrimination and violence against women and girls, and ensure that specific issues affecting older women are given greater visibility and attention, are addressed through

the fulfilment of obligations under relevant international conventions and agreements and are included in national policies and programmes to prevent and eliminate violence against women;

## **B. Addressing structural and underlying causes and risk factors so as to prevent violence against women and girls**

- (cc) Accelerate efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls and ensure their equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to education and to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; ensure that all children, particularly girls, have equal access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality, and renew their efforts to improve and expand girls' education at all levels, including the secondary and higher levels, in all academic areas; and increase the ability of girls to attend school and extracurricular activities by investing in public infrastructure projects and accessible quality public services and providing a safe environment;
- (dd) Promote women's full participation in the formal economy, in particular in economic decision-making, and their equal access to full employment and decent work; empower women in the informal sector; and ensure that women and men enjoy equal treatment in the workplace, as well as equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and equal access to power and decision-making, and promote sharing of paid and unpaid work;
- (ee) Accelerate efforts to develop, review and strengthen policies, and allocate adequate financial and human resources, in order to address the structural and underlying causes of violence against women and girls, including gender discrimination, inequality, unequal power relations between women and men,



- gender stereotypes, poverty as well as their lack of empowerment, in particular in the context of the economic and financial crisis; and accelerate efforts to eradicate poverty and persistent legal, social and economic inequalities, including by strengthening the economic participation, empowerment and inclusion of women and girls, in order to decrease their risk of violence;
- (ff) Refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries;
  - (gg) Take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational and other measures to protect and promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities as they are more vulnerable to all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including in the workplace, educational institutions, the home and other settings;
  - (hh) Undertake legislative, administrative, financial and other measures to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies, inter alia, by means of international cooperation; prioritize and intensify initiatives towards the economic empowerment of women at the grass-roots level, including through entrepreneurship education and business incubators, as a way of uplifting their status, thereby reducing their vulnerability to violence;
  - (ii) Refrain from using social justifications for denying women their freedom of movement, the right to own property and the right to equal protection under the law;
  - (jj) Design and implement national policies that aim at transforming those social norms that condone violence against women and girls, and work to counteract attitudes by which women and girls are regarded as subordinate to men and boys or as having stereotyped roles that perpetuate practices involving violence or coercion;
  - (kk) Develop and implement educational programmes and teaching materials, including comprehensive evidence-based education for human sexuality, based on full and accurate information, for all adolescents and youth, in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities, with the appropriate direction and guidance from parents and legal guardians, with the involvement of children, adolescents, youth and communities, and in coordination with women's, youth and specialized non-governmental organizations, in order to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women of all ages, to eliminate prejudices and to promote and build informed decision-making, communication and risk reduction skills for the development of respectful relationships and based on gender equality and human rights, as well as teacher education and training programmes for both formal and non-formal education;
  - (ll) Carry out awareness-raising and education campaigns, in cooperation with civil society organizations, especially women's organizations, through different means of communication, targeting the general public, young people, men and boys, to address the structural and underlying causes of violence and abuse against women and girls; to overcome gender stereotypes and promote zero tolerance for such violence; to remove the stigma of being a victim and survivor of violence; and to create an enabling environment where women and girls can easily report incidences of violence and make use of the services available and of protection and assistance programmes;



- (mm) Mobilize communities and institutions to address and change attitudes, behaviours and practices that perpetuate and condone gender stereotypes and all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, by engaging with women's and youth organizations, national machineries for the advancement of women, national human rights institutions where they exist, schools, educational and media institutions and others directly working with women and girls, men and boys and with individuals at all levels of society and in all settings, religious and community leaders and elders, teachers and parents;
- (nn) Promote and protect the human rights of all women, including their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence; and adopt and accelerate the implementation of laws, policies and programmes which protect and enable the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including their reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and their review outcomes;
- (oo) Develop and implement gender-sensitive policies, strategies, programmes and measures which promote greater understanding and recognition that caregiving is a critical societal function, and encourage the equal sharing of responsibilities and chores between men and women in caregiving, including for persons with disabilities, older persons and people living with HIV, as well as for child-rearing, parenting and domestic work; and also work to change attitudes that reinforce the division of labour based on gender, in order to promote shared family responsibility for work in the home and reduce the domestic work burden for women and girls;
- (pp) Engage, educate, encourage and support men and boys to take responsibility for their behaviour, to ensure that men and adolescent boys take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour, and to refrain from all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls; develop, invest in and implement policies, strategies and programmes, including comprehensive education programmes to increase their understanding of the harmful effects of violence and how it undermines gender equality and human dignity, promote respectful relationships, provide positive role models for gender equality and encourage men and boys to take an active part and become strategic partners and allies in the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls;
- (qq) Review, enact and strictly enforce laws and regulations concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage, raising the minimum age for marriage where necessary, and generate social support for the enforcement of these laws in order to end the practice of child, early and forced marriage;
- (rr) Ensure the provision of viable alternatives and institutional support, including for girls who are already married and/or pregnant, especially educational opportunities with an emphasis on keeping girls in school through post-primary education and promoting the empowerment of girls through improving educational quality and ensuring safe and hygienic conditions in schools, physical access to education, including by establishing safe residential facilities and childcare, and increasing financial incentives to women and their families where necessary;
- (ss) Ensure the access of adolescents to services and programmes on preventing early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and

HIV, ensuring personal safety, and preventing the use and abuse of alcohol and other harmful substances;

- (tt) Develop policies and programmes, giving priority to formal and informal education programmes that support girls and enable them to acquire knowledge, develop self-esteem and take responsibility for their own lives, including access to a sustainable livelihood; and place special focus on programmes to educate women and men, especially parents and caregivers, on the importance of the physical and mental health and well-being of girls, including the elimination of child, early and forced marriage, violence against women and girls, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation, including commercial sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, rape, incest and abduction, and the elimination of discrimination against girls such as in food allocation;
- (uu) Develop and support existing policies and programmes targeting children and young people, especially women, who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence or sexual abuse, including protection for children in the justice system, so as to reduce the risk of their possible revictimization or perpetration of violence and restore their health; and implement such programmes in a gender-responsive manner with the meaningful participation of young people, civil society and women's and youth organizations, and educational and health institutions;
- (vv) Recognize the important role the media can play in the elimination of gender stereotypes, including those perpetuated by commercial advertisements, and in promoting non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive reporting, including by preserving the confidentiality of the identity of victims and survivors where appropriate; and, to the extent consistent with freedom of expression, encourage the media to improve public awareness

on violence against women and girls, to train those who work in the media and to develop and strengthen self-regulatory mechanisms to promote balanced and non-stereotypical portrayals of women, with a view to eliminating discrimination against and the exploitation of women and girls and to refraining from presenting them as inferior beings and to exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, and instead present women and girls as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development;

- (ww) Support the development and use of information and communications technology and social media as a resource for the empowerment of women and girls, including access to information on the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls; and develop mechanisms to combat the use of information and communications technology and social media to perpetrate violence against women and girls, including the criminal misuse of information and communications technology for sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, child pornography and trafficking in women and girls, and emerging forms of violence, such as cyberstalking, cyberbullying and privacy violations that compromise the safety of women and girls;
- (xx) Improve the safety of girls at, and on the way to and from, school, including by establishing a safe and violence-free environment by improving infrastructure such as transportation and providing separate and adequate sanitation facilities, improved lighting, playgrounds and safe environments; adopting national policies to prohibit, prevent and address violence against children, especially girls, including sexual harassment and bullying and other forms of violence, through measures such as conducting violence prevention activities in schools and communities, and establishing and enforcing penalties for violence against girls;

- (yy) Take measures to ensure that all workplaces are free from discrimination and exploitation, violence, and sexual harassment and bullying, and that they address discrimination and violence against women and girls, as appropriate, through measures such as regulatory and oversight frameworks and reforms, collective agreements, codes of conduct, including appropriate disciplinary measures, protocols and procedures, referral of cases of violence to health services for treatment and police for investigation; as well as through awareness-raising and capacity-building, in collaboration with employers, unions and workers, including workplace services and flexibility for victims and survivors;
- (zz) Increase measures to protect women and girls from violence and harassment, including sexual harassment and bullying, in both public and private spaces, to address security and safety, through awareness-raising, involvement of local communities, crime prevention laws, policies, programmes such as the Safe Cities Initiative of the United Nations, improved urban planning, infrastructures, public transport and street lighting, and also through social and interactive media;
- (aaa) Condemn and take action to prevent violence against women and girls in health-care settings, including sexual harassment, humiliation and forced medical procedures, or those conducted without informed consent, and which may be irreversible, such as forced hysterectomy, forced caesarean section, forced sterilization, forced abortion, and forced use of contraceptives, especially for particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged women and girls, such as those living with HIV, women and girls with disabilities, indigenous and Afro-descendent women and girls, pregnant adolescents and young mothers, older women, and women and girls from national or ethnic minorities;
- (bbb) Further adopt and implement measures to ensure the social and legal inclusion and protection of women migrants, including women migrant workers in origin, transit and destination countries, and promote and protect the full realization of their human rights, and their protection against violence and exploitation; implement gender-sensitive policies and programmes for women migrant workers and provide safe and legal channels that recognize their skills and education, provide fair labour conditions, and as appropriate facilitate their productive employment and decent work as well as integration into the labour force;
- (ccc) Also take measures to ensure the protection of self-employed workers in cross-border work and women seasonal workers from violence and discrimination;

**C. Strengthening multisectoral services, programmes and responses to violence against women and girls**

- (ddd) Establish comprehensive, coordinated, inter-disciplinary, accessible and sustained multisectoral services, programmes and responses at all levels, and with the support of all available technologies, for all victims and survivors of all forms of violence against women and girls based on their needs, that are adequately resourced and include effective and coordinated action by, as appropriate, police and the justice sector, legal aid services, health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and medical, psychological and other counselling services, including specialist services as appropriate, State and independent women’s shelters and counselling centres, 24-hour hotlines, social aid services, one-stop crisis centres, immigration services, child services, public housing services to provide low threshold, easy to reach and safe assistance for women and children, as well as assistance, protection and support through

- access to long-term accommodation, educational, employment and economic opportunities, and take steps to ensure the safety and security of health-care workers and service providers who assist and support victims and survivors of violence, and in cases of girl child victims ensure that such services and responses take into account the best interests of the child;
- (eee) Further take measures to coordinate services through the establishment of processes for referral between services of victims and survivors while ensuring their confidentiality and safety, establish national benchmarks and timelines, and monitor their progress and implementation; as well as ensure access to coordinated multisectoral services, programmes and responses for all women and girls at risk of or subjected to violence;
  - (fff) Ensure the availability and accessibility for victims and survivors and their children of services, programmes and opportunities, for their full recovery and reintegration into society, as well as full access to justice, including for those subjected to domestic violence and other forms of violence, by putting in place measures, and where these exist, expanding such measures; and ensure the provision of adequate and timely information on available support services and legal measures, when possible in a language that they understand and in which they can communicate;
  - (ggg) Create, develop and implement a set of policies, and support the establishment of rehabilitative services, in order to encourage and bring changes in the attitudes and behaviours of perpetrators of violence against women and girls and to reduce the likelihood of reoffending, including in cases of domestic violence, rape and harassment, as well as monitor and assess their impact and effect;
  - (hhh) Improve access to timely, affordable and quality health systems for women and girls, including through gender-sensitive national strategies and public-health policies and programmes that are comprehensive, affordable and better targeted to addressing their needs and that encourage women's active participation in their design and implementation; and also enhance women's access to affordable, safe, effective and good quality treatment and medicines, with a special emphasis on the poor, vulnerable and marginalized segments of the population;
  - (iii) Address all health consequences, including the physical, mental and sexual and reproductive health consequences, of violence against women and girls by providing accessible health-care services that are responsive to trauma and include affordable, safe, effective and good-quality medicines, first line support, treatment of injuries and psychosocial and mental health support, emergency contraception, safe abortion where such services are permitted by national law, post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV infection, diagnosis and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, training for medical professionals to effectively identify and treat women subjected to violence, as well as forensic examinations by appropriately trained professionals;
  - (jjj) Accelerate efforts to address the intersection of HIV and AIDS and violence against all women and girls, in particular the common risk factors, including through strategies to address domestic and sexual violence, and to strengthen coordination and integration of policies, programmes and services to address the intersection between HIV and violence against women and girls, and ensure that responses to HIV and AIDS are leveraged to prevent violence against them, while meeting their specific needs for sexual and reproductive health-care services, as well as HIV and AIDS diagnosis, affordable and accessible treatment and preven-

tion, including procurement and supply of safe and effective prevention commodities, including male and female condoms;

- (kkk) Eliminate discrimination and violence against women and girls living with HIV as well as the caregivers of persons living with HIV, and take into account their vulnerability to stigma, discrimination, poverty and marginalization from their families and communities when implementing programmes and measures which encourage the equal sharing of caring responsibilities;
- (lll) Expand the availability of health-care services, and in particular, strengthen maternal and reproductive health centres, as key entry points that provide support, referrals to services and protection to families, women and girls at risk of violence, especially sexual violence, and which provide support to adolescents in order to avoid early and unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, through education, information and access to sexual and reproductive health-care services;

#### **D. Improving the evidence-base**

- (mmm) Carry out continued multidisciplinary research and analysis on the structural and underlying causes of, and cost and risk factors for, violence against women and girls and its types and prevalence, in order to inform the development and revision of laws and their implementation, policies and strategies, and make such information public to support awareness-raising efforts;
- (nnn) Collect, collate, analyse and disseminate reliable, comparable and anonymized data and statistics on a regular basis, disaggregated by sex and age, at the national and local levels on different forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, including the health costs and economic costs to society of such discrimina-

tion and violence, and also consider all other relevant factors, such as accessibility, to inform the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes;

- (ooo) Improve the collection, harmonization and use of administrative data, including, where appropriate, from the police, health sector and the judiciary, on incidents of violence against women and girls, including data on the relationship between the perpetrator and victim and geographic location, ensuring that confidentiality, ethical and safety considerations are taken into account in the process of data collection, and improving the effectiveness of the services and programmes provided and protecting the safety and security of the victim;
- (ppp) Develop national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess policies and programmes, including preventive and response strategies to address violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres;
- (qqq) Promote the sharing of best practices and experiences, as well as feasible, practical and successful policy and programme interventions; as well as promote the application of these successful interventions and experiences in other settings.

35. The commission emphasizes that ending violence against women and girls is imperative, including for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the millennium development goals, and must be a priority for the eradication of poverty, the achievement of inclusive sustainable development, peace and security, human rights, health, gender equality and the empowerment of women, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and social cohesion, and vice versa. the commission strongly recommends that the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women be considered as a priority in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

# III. REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION AND THE OUTCOMES OF THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

BEIJING+20 REVIEW, 2015

## A. TRENDS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

**Twenty years have now passed since the Fourth World Conference on Women set out an expansive vision and landmark set of commitments for achieving gender equality in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In 1995, gender equality advocates brought to the fore the lack of empowerment and the multitude of human rights violations experienced by women and girls and the need for comprehensive laws and policies as well as the transformation of institutions, both formal (e.g. states, markets, national and global governance structures) and informal (e.g. family, community), to achieve gender equality and the full realization of the human rights of women and girls.**

Over the last two decades there has been uneven progress towards gender equality. Countries have increasingly removed discrimination in laws and adopted laws to promote gender equality and address violence against women and girls. There have been significant gains in girls' enrolment in primary and secondary education. In some regions, women's participation in the labour force has increased.

Some regions have made progress in increasing women's access to contraception. Harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage, have started to decline in some contexts. There have been important gains in women's representation in national parliaments in some countries. Significant normative

advances have been made in the global agenda on women, peace and security.

Overall progress, however, has been unacceptably slow with stagnation and even regress in some contexts. Change towards gender equality has not been deep enough; nor has it been irreversible. Discrimination in the law persists in many countries, particularly in the area of family law. Women's increasing educational attainment and rising participation in the labour market have not been matched with better employment conditions, prospects for advancement and equal pay. At the current pace of progress it would take more than 75 years to reach equal remuneration for work of equal value.<sup>1</sup>

Too many women remain without access to decent work, are denied equal rights to inheritance and property and are vulnerable to poverty. Women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work continues to limit their enjoyment of human rights in several areas. Violence against women and girls persists at alarmingly high levels in many forms in public and private spaces. Unacceptably high levels of maternal mortality persist in some regions. Women's already limited presence in decision-making at all levels is frequently subject to setbacks and women remain significantly underrepresented at the highest levels of political leadership.

1. International Labour Organization, Report of the Director-General: A New Era of Social Justice, One-hundredth Session, International Labour Conference, Geneva, Switzerland, 1-17 June 2011 (Geneva, 2011).

Overall progress in the implementation of the Platform for Action has been particularly slow for women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Stark gaps exist for poor women and girls living in rural areas and in poor urban settlements on several indicators including enrolment in education, maternal mortality and access to services such as water and sanitation. Young women are at much greater risk of new HIV infections, compared to their male peers. Marginalized groups of women such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, migrant women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women are at particular risk of discrimination and violence.

Despite the persistent gaps, many countries have made important advances to realize women's

rights by introducing and implementing laws, policies and programmes. Many of the transformative advances have been driven by women's movements, and have often been more effective where they have worked in alliance with other gender equality advocates, in local and national governments, parliaments and political parties. These advances have served to ignite several important paradigm shifts in policy responses, such as the recognition and action on the continuum of violence against women in private and public settings as a public concern and the recognition of unpaid care work as a public good. Indeed, the role of autonomous feminist organizations in advancing women's rights is recognized in comparative research on 70 countries over four decades as the most critical factor in the implementation of gender equality policies.<sup>2</sup>

## AREA D: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

### KEY MESSAGES

All regions have unacceptably high rates of violence against women, with recent global estimates showing that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

- A major obstacle for ending violence against women is the persistence of discriminatory attitudes and social norms that normalize and permit violence.
- Ensuring the implementation of strong and comprehensive legal and policy frameworks which address all forms of violence against women in all countries remains an urgent priority, along with adequate resourcing for implementation, long term strategies to prevent violence against women and ensuring accessibly and high quality services for survivors.

The Platform for Action recognized violence against women as a violation of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms and as an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace. The Platform for Action called on States to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women; to study the causes and consequences of violence against women and to eliminate trafficking in women.

### Global Trends

Recent global estimates show that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/ or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup> While there is some variation across regions, all regions have unacceptably high rates of violence against women. Among low and middle- income

2. Mala Htun and Laurel Weldon, "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspectives 1975-2005," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 106, issue 3, (August 2012).

3. World Health Organization, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence* (Geneva, 2013)



regions, Africa has the highest proportion of women reporting either physical and/ or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, at 45.6 per cent, followed by SouthEast Asia (40.2 per cent), Eastern Mediterranean (36.4 per cent), the Americas (36.1 per cent), Western Pacific (27.9 per cent) and Europe (27.2 per cent).<sup>4</sup> In high income countries, 32.7 per cent of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Owing to the limited availability of data and comparability challenges, an analysis of global and regional trends over time is not possible.

The most common form of violence experienced by women is intimate partner violence, which often leads to injuries and at times, results in death. As confirmed in a global study on homicide, almost half of female homicide victims are killed by their intimate partner or family members, whereas the figure for men is just over 1 in 20 homicide victims.<sup>5</sup> Alarmingly, the majority of women who experience violence do not seek help or support. While global data are not available, a study of 42,000 women undertaken across 28 member States of the European Union found that only one third of victims of partner violence and one quarter of victims of non-partner violence contacted either the police or support services following the most serious incident of violence. Victims reported the most serious incident of partner violence to the police in only 14 per cent of cases.<sup>6</sup>

A major obstacle for ending violence against women is the persistence of discriminatory attitudes and social norms that normalize and permit violence. Victimblaming attitudes are widespread across all countries.

Data from 37 developing countries show that 21 per cent of women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she argues with him.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly 27 per cent of women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she neglects the children.<sup>8</sup> While those surveys collected data from women about their attitudes, surveys of men also reveal high levels of acceptance of violence against women. A 2010 survey conducted in 15 out of 27 member States of the European Union asked whether women's behaviour was a cause of domestic violence against women. The proportion of individuals who agreed with this statement averaged 52 per cent and ranged from 33 per cent to 86 per cent across countries.<sup>9</sup>

The most recent Global Report on Trafficking in Persons provides an overview of patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the global, regional and national levels and is based on trafficking cases detected mainly between 2007 and 2010. Women account for between 55 per cent and 60 per cent of all trafficking victims detected globally, and women and girls together account for some 75 per cent. Moreover, the trafficking of children remains a serious problem, as 27 per cent of all victims are children and, of every three child victims, two are girls and one is a boy.<sup>10</sup>

There is limited availability of global trend data on other forms of violence experienced by women. A study of 42,000 women in the European Union found that 55 per cent of women have experienced sexual harassment at least once since the age of 15, and one in five women (21 per cent) had experienced such harassment in the 12 months prior to the survey.<sup>11</sup> The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated in 2013 that more than 125 million girls and women had undergone some form of female genital mutilation/ cutting in 29 countries across Africa and the Middle East. Another 30 million girls were estimated to be at risk of being cut in the next decade.<sup>12</sup> Trend data show that the practice is becoming less common in a little over half of the 29 countries studied.<sup>13</sup>

4. Ibid. These regional classifications are taken from the WHO study which covers only 81 countries in total, i.e. 23 high income countries and 58 low and middle income countries. The data is for 2010.

5. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide* (Vienna, 2013).

6. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence Against Women: An EU-Wide Survey* (Luxembourg, 2014).

7. UN Women analysis of Demographic Health Surveys. Data from most recent survey between 2009 and 2014.

8. Ibid.

9. Enrique Garcia, *World Health Organization Bulletin: Intimate partner violence against women and victim-blaming attitudes among Europeans* (WHO, Geneva, 2014).

10. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012* (Vienna, 2012).



However, owing to population growth, the number of women affected by female genital mutilation/cutting is actually increasing. With respect to child, early and forced marriage (see Section L.) UNICEF estimates that more than 700 million women alive in 2014 were married before their eighteenth birthday.<sup>14</sup> The harmful practice is declining, but still persists at unacceptably high levels in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

### What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Strengthening legal and policy frameworks to address all forms of violence against women through: the adoption and reforms of laws; increased efforts to implement and enforce laws and improve women's access to justice and continued efforts to adopt and improve national action plans.
- Accelerating efforts to prevent violence against women through public awareness campaigns, interventions in the education system and community mobilization activities.
- Increasing the provision and integration of multi-sectoral support services by strengthening referral mechanisms, improving specialized services and a greater focus on training and capacity building of service providers.
- Improving data and evidence on violence against women through dedicated surveys and crime surveys and research on the causes of violence against women, prevalence, attitudes and consequences.

### Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

Ensuring the implementation of strong and comprehensive legal and policy frameworks which address all forms of violence against women in all countries remains an urgent priority, along with adequate resourcing for implementation. Accelerating implementation will require comprehensive and long term strategies to prevent violence against women which address unequal power relations, change attitudes and realize women's human rights in all areas. There is a need to strengthen responses by integrating the prevention and response to such violence within broader policy frameworks such as national development plans, health, education, security and justice policies.

Laws, policies and programmes to address violence against women should specifically address the factors that place marginalized women and girls at particular risk of violence and create an enabling environment for these groups of women to find support in addressing violence. In addition, comprehensive strategies are needed to combat the multiple and newly emerging forms of violence against women and the various contexts in which violence occurs. There is also a need for much greater attention to the accessibility of, the quality of services, including through training of providers and better integration and coordination. Finally, States should increase their efforts to collect and report data in accordance with the nine violence against women indicators endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

11. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Violence Against Women: An EU-Wide Survey (Luxembourg, 2014).

12. United Nations Children's Fund, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Statistical Overview and Exploration of the Dynamics of Change (New York, 2013).

13. Ibid.

14. United Nations Children's Fund, Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects (New York, 2014).

# REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION AND THE OUTCOMES OF THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (FIFTY-NINTH SESSION),  
9-10 MARCH 2015

## B. REVIEW OF NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION - AREA D: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

112. The Platform for Action recognized violence against women as a violation of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms and as an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace. The Platform for Action called on States to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women, to study the causes and consequences of violence against women and to eliminate trafficking in women.

113. In recent years, United Nations intergovernmental and expert bodies have continued to strengthen the global normative framework on violence against women. Notably, the Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-seventh session, in 2013, adopted agreed conclusions that highlighted emerging issues, such as the role of information, communication and technology and social media, as well as particular forms of violence, such as gender-related killings/femicide and violence in public spaces.<sup>35</sup> The General Assembly regularly adopts resolutions on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and addresses specific forms, such as trafficking in women and girls, female genital mutilations and violence against women migrant workers (see resolutions 68/137, 69/147, 69/149 and 69/150). Violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations was addressed by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its general recommendation No. 30, adopted at its fifty-sixth session, in 2013.<sup>15</sup>

114. The Human Rights Council also continued to address violence against women, including its particular forms, such as rape and sexual violence and child, early and forced marriages, violence against women human rights defenders and remedies for women who have been subjected to violence (see for example, Council resolutions 23/25 and 24/23). The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences has examined several topics, such as multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence against women, gender-related killings of women and State responsibility, and the use of the standard of due diligence, in eliminating such violence.<sup>16</sup>

### 1. Global trends

115. Recent global estimates show that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>17</sup> While there is some variation across regions, all regions have unacceptably high rates of violence against women. Among low- and middle-income regions, Africa has the highest proportion of women reporting either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, at 45.6 per cent, followed by South-East Asia (40.2 per cent), Eastern Mediterranean (36.4 per cent), the Americas (36.1 per cent), Western Pacific (27.9 per cent) and Europe (27.2 per

15. See [A/69/38](#), part two, chap. VII.

16. See, for example, [A/HRC/14/22](#), [A/HRC/17/26](#), [A/HRC/20/16](#) and [A/HRC/23/49](#).

17. World Health Organization, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2013).

cent).<sup>18</sup> In high income countries, 32.7 per cent of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Owing to the limited availability of data and comparability challenges, an analysis of global and regional trends over time is not possible.

116. The most common form of violence experienced by women is intimate partner violence, which often leads to injuries and at times, results in death. As confirmed in a global study on homicide, almost half of female homicide victims are killed by their intimate partner or family members, whereas the figure for men is just over 1 in 20 homicide victims.<sup>19</sup> Alarming, the majority of women who experience violence do not seek help or support. While global data are not available, a study of 42,000 women undertaken across 28 member States of the European Union found that only one third of victims of partner violence and one quarter of victims of non-partner violence contacted either the police or support services following the most serious incident of violence. Victims reported the most serious incident of partner violence to the police in only 14 per cent of cases.<sup>20</sup>

117. A major obstacle for ending violence against women is the persistence of discriminatory attitudes and social norms that normalize and permit violence. Victim-blaming attitudes are widespread across all countries. Data from 37 developing countries show that 21 per cent of women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she argues with him.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, 27 per cent of women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she neglects the children. While those surveys collected data from women about their attitudes, surveys of men also reveal high levels of acceptance of violence against women. A 2010 survey conducted in 15 out of 27 States mem-

bers of the European Union asked whether women's behaviour was a cause of domestic violence against women. The proportion of individuals who agreed with this statement averaged 52 per cent and ranged from 33 per cent to 86 per cent across countries.<sup>22</sup>

118. The most recent Global Report on Trafficking in Persons provides an overview of patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the global, regional and national levels and is based on trafficking cases detected mainly between 2007 and 2010. Women account for between 55 per cent and 60 per cent of all trafficking victims detected globally, and women and girls together account for some 75 per cent. Moreover, the trafficking of children remains a serious problem, as 27 per cent of all victims are children and, of every three child victims, two are girls and one is a boy.

119. There is limited availability of global trend data on other forms of violence experienced by women. A study of 42,000 women in the European Union found that 55 per cent of women have experienced sexual harassment at least once since the age of 15, and one in five women (21 per cent) had experienced such harassment in the 12 months prior to the survey. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated in 2013 that more than 125 million girls and women had undergone some form of female genital mutilation/cutting in 29 countries across Africa and the Middle East. Another 30 million girls were estimated to be at risk of being cut in the next decade. Trend data show that the practice is becoming less common in a little over half of the 29 countries studied.<sup>23</sup> However, owing to population growth, the number of women affected by female genital mutilation/cutting is actually increasing. With respect to child, early and forced marriage (see sect.V.L), UNICEF estimates that more than 700 million women alive in 2014 were married before

18. Ibid. The regional classifications are taken from the study in question, which covers only 81 countries in total, i.e., 23 high-income countries and 58 low- and middle-income countries. The data are for 2010

19. Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.14.IV.1). European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Violence against Women: An EU-Wide Survey (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2014).

20. UN-Women analysis of demographic and health surveys. Data from most recent survey, between 2009 and 2014.

21. Enrique Gracia, "Intimate partner violence against women and victim-blaming attitudes among Europeans", Bulletin of the World Health Organization, vol. 92, No. 5 (2014).

22. Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.IV.1).

their eighteenth birthday.<sup>24</sup> The harmful practice is declining, but still persists at unacceptably high levels in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

## 2. Overview of actions taken by governments to implement the Platform for Action

120. Eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls requires a comprehensive and coordinated set of actions to prevent and respond to such violence and to tackle the underlying causes of violence against women and girls. It is vital to integrate actions to eliminate violence against women within comprehensive strategies for addressing gender inequality more broadly, particularly for addressing the structural and systemic inequalities that are a cause and consequence of such violence.

121. Member States have taken a range of actions to address this critical area of concern. Four major trends have emerged:

- (a) strengthening legal and policy frameworks to address all forms of violence against women;
- (b) accelerating efforts to prevent violence against women;
- (c) increasing the provision and integration of multisectoral support services; and
- (d) improving data and evidence on violence against women.

### Strengthening legal and policy frameworks to address all forms of violence against women

122. A strong legal framework is vital for the elimination of violence against women. It is also important to review and reform other relevant legislation and policies, including family law and access to land and resources, as well as immigration, so as to ensure that they support women subject to violence in leaving abusive relationships, prevent further violence and address the consequences of such violence. While the majority of States continue to address violence through existing criminal

laws or laws on specific forms of violence, several States, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as a growing number in other regions, have adopted comprehensive laws to guarantee women a life free from violence that include measures to criminalize and prevent violence, protect women against violence and punish perpetrators. States have also incorporated specific provisions in their national constitutions to prevent violence and protect women in that regard.

123. States across all regions have also continued to strengthen legislative frameworks on violence against women by amending laws to criminalize additional forms of violence against women, such as trafficking, sexual harassment and domestic violence or harmful practices such as female genital mutilation; expand definitions of domestic violence and rape; define violence against women as a human rights violation; increase penalties; increase protection for victims; increase efforts to prevent violence; and provide funding for the enforcement of laws. Civil protection orders have been increasingly introduced to either restrict the behaviour of perpetrators or remove them from a joint place of residence. Most civil protection orders apply to situations of domestic violence, but there has been a growing effort to extend protection against other forms of violence, such as forced marriage and stalking.

124. States have identified barriers to the implementation and enforcement of laws on violence against women, such as the lack of political will, backlash from conservative forces, a lack of knowledge about laws, poor provision of and access to legal services, the lack of capacity of courts, delays in hearing cases and the absence of qualified staff and personnel. In response, States have introduced specific actions, including awareness-raising programmes to increase knowledge of laws among the general public, particularly women, and among enforcement agencies; issuance of specific guidelines for justice agencies to improve their responsiveness to women who have experienced violence; electronic monitoring

23. United Nations Children's Fund, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Statistical Overview and Exploration of the Dynamics of Change* (New York, 2013).

24. United Nations Children's Fund, "Ending child marriage: progress and prospects" (New York, 2014)

systems for cases; and training for judges and law enforcement officials. States have also continued to introduce measures to improve women's access to justice, including by providing access to free legal services, appointed specialized personnel and units within justice agencies and established specific helplines and information websites.

125. Since 2010, countries across all regions have increasingly adopted or are in the process of developing national action plans and strategies to address violence against women, although they vary greatly in their scope and coverage. Some States have introduced comprehensive national action plans that cover multiple forms of violence against women and include measures covering prevention, access to justice, support services, data and research. Several States are now implementing their second or third national action plans, indicating that they are an integral part of a long-term strategy to address violence against women. The more comprehensive national action plans have specific elements on monitoring progress and evaluating the impact the actions plans, with specific timelines and benchmarks. They also provide for the establishment of implementation mechanisms that enable a coordinated response from key government agencies. In some cases there is engagement at the ministerial level in the implementation of national action plans, with a committee of ministers involved in the review of progress and the allocation of resources. Other national action plans outline the engagement of, and coordination and dialogue with, women's civil society organizations. Women's civil society organizations play a key role in shaping and monitoring national action plans and advising governments on laws and policies to prevent and end violence against women.

126. A number of action plans respond to specific forms of violence, such as domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, femicide, sorcery-related violence and violence against older women, as well as harmful practices, including female genital mutilation. Recognizing the need to complement

national action plans with strategies adapted to the needs of specific subnational regions and territories, an important development in recent years has been the introduction of policy frameworks at the provincial, regional or local levels. In some cases, States have linked their national action plans or strategies to eliminate violence against women with national development plans. In conflict-affected contexts, States have included specific components on ending impunity and security sector reform in their national action plans. States are also taking action to respond to the specific forms of violence experienced by women with disabilities, immigrant and migrant women, indigenous women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

127. A major challenge for the effective implementation of laws, policies and frameworks to address violence against women is the lack of sufficient resources. The economic crises since 2007/2008 and subsequent austerity measures have resulted in cutbacks in social services, with potentially negative impacts on women survivors and victims of violence seeking support services. Despite the existence of national action plans or laws to address violence against women, several States reported having allocated inadequate resources for the implementation of those laws and policies and for the provision of quality support services for survivors.

128. In many contexts, laws remain inadequate, for example by allowing for the mitigation of sentencing in cases of rape where the perpetrator marries the victim, or by not criminalizing marital rape or domestic violence. Even where strong laws are in place, there remain challenges as regards enforcement and implementation. While an increasing number of countries have introduced national action plans, many of these are limited and respond only to a few forms of violence, such as domestic violence or trafficking, and do not include actions on coordination, monitoring and evaluation. Very few States provided information on resources dedicated to the implementation of

national action plans; however one country has undertaken a costing study to identify the minimum resources required to address violence and advance gender equality.

### Accelerating efforts to prevent violence against women

129. It is increasingly recognized that preventing violence before it occurs or re-occurs can have a significant positive impact on the health and on the social and economic well-being of individuals, families, communities and societies. Preventing violence requires tackling the underlying causes — the unequal power relations between women and men and the persistence of attitudes, norms and gender stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls. Since 2010, there has been an increasing emphasis on preventing violence against women and girls.

130. Awareness-raising regarding the causes and consequences of violence against women should be a component of a comprehensive strategy to prevent such violence. States across all regions have increasingly implemented a wide range of public awareness campaigns to address violence against women. The campaigns employ different strategies, such as promoting a zero tolerance approach to violence against women, targeting different parts of the population, involving men in efforts to end violence against women or increasing awareness among youth of stereotypes and inequalities that perpetuate violence. Campaigns have aimed to prevent specific forms of violence, such as domestic violence, rape, workplace harassment or female genital mutilation. A number of States have started to use social media as part of awareness-raising campaigns.

131. Another important area of intervention lies within the education system, which can contribute towards changing attitudes and norms that condone violence against women, which are of-

ten formed at an early age. States have reported on actions in the school environment to challenge norms and attitudes that condone violence against women and build positive norms of respect, equality and healthy relationships. Comprehensive sexuality education, school-based programmes on healthy/unhealthy and equal/unequal relationships and the training of teachers are increasingly being used to help prevent violence against women.

132. Community mobilization can also play a role in challenging norms that perpetuate violence against women and in creating positive norms and attitudes based on gender equality and respect for women. There are increasing efforts across all regions to mobilize communities in combating violence against women, through strategies such as developing sensitization activities in communities and schools, establishing local committees against harmful practices and conducting national and local consultations on combating discriminatory social norms and stereotypes. The engagement of traditional and cultural leaders in dialogues on ending violence against women and harmful practices has been implemented as a strategy to change attitudes and norms in some States. There are growing efforts to engage men and boys in preventing violence against women through community mobilization programmes, training and capacity-building activities. These initiatives create spaces for men to talk about violence against women and masculinity and they contribute to making violence against women an acceptable topic for public discourse and media.<sup>25</sup>

133. Although States are increasingly recognizing the importance of prevention, very few have introduced long-term, coordinated and cross-cutting prevention strategies, with the vast majority reporting on short-term piecemeal activities. There is very little information provided about the impact or effectiveness of interventions, indicating the need for greater focus on monitoring,

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25. "Thematic evaluation: the contribution of UN-Women to prevent violence against women and expand access to services" (New York, 2013).



knowledge management and evaluation.

### **Increasing the provision and integration of multi-sectoral support services.**

134. Victims and survivors of violence require timely access to quality, integrated and coordinated services that respond to injuries and other health and sexual and reproductive health concerns, protect them from further violence, provide them with support, including legal advice, counselling and access to safe accommodation, and address long-term needs, such as finding accommodation and accessing social protection and decent work. States' responses confirm consistent attention to the provision of support services for survivors of violence against women, although there is significant variation in the type, quality and coverage of services. The most common type of services include helplines, health-care services, police, shelters and safe accommodation, psychological support, free legal services, justice services and childcare support services. Women's civil society organizations play a critical role in providing services and setting standards for the quality of services for women who experience violence.

135. An important development in recent years, across all regions, is the establishment of coordinated and integrated services to support women who experience violence. This includes integrating referral mechanisms by creating networks of existing services and bringing together relevant sectors to respond to violence against women. Typically, integrated services include health care, legal aid, police, shelters and psychological support, however some States have also integrated social protection, education and employment services. Integrated services are often provided as a one-stop centre, or through comprehensive services, or in some cases, through the provision of mobile clinics in the community. Specialized courts and police services for dealing with violence against women have also emerged in a number of countries. Specialized police services are a growing trend in Latin America in particular. Some States

have appointed focal points in such key services as the police and courts. Services for addressing violence against women are also increasingly integrated within sexual and reproductive health-care services, which can include HIV services.

136. There is a growing focus on training to increase the capacity of professionals to respond effectively to violence against women and increase the quality of services. States reported on implementing training for teachers and the police, as well as justice system and health-care service professionals. In some cases, training is delivered in collaboration with non-government organizations with specialist knowledge of violence against women, but there is very little information overall on the sustainability, quality or impact of training. Some States have also introduced standard operating procedures, quality standards and issued guidance and regulations to improve the quality of services.

137. While many countries noted the limited availability of services, particularly in rural and remote areas, as a key challenge, only a few countries have taken specific steps to increase access to services in rural areas. Little attention has been focused on targeted services for marginalized groups of women, including women with disabilities, indigenous women and migrant women. Very few countries reported on the participation of survivors in shaping the quality or delivery of services, although some States have introduced specific programmes to strengthen State accountability in ending violence against women, with a focus on the accountability of service providers.

### **Improving data and evidence on violence against women**

138. Internationally agreed measurements about the scope and prevalence of violence against women are essential, as they allow for global comparability and the monitoring of trends over time. There has been important progress in improving data on violence against women in recent years.

As of 2014, around 100 countries had nationally representative data on the prevalence of violence against women, although there is great variation in how the data are collected. Many States have collected data through dedicated surveys on violence against women or through crime surveys. Surveys and research on violence against women have addressed the causes of violence against women, prevalence, attitudes and consequences. Some countries have undertaken qualitative studies to understand violence against specific groups of women, such as indigenous women. Several countries also reported on efforts to collect administrative data on violence against women, including registers of reported cases and access to services.

139. Despite progress, knowledge and evidence gaps remain a significant challenge, both in terms of data on the nature and extent of different forms of violence in private and public spaces, but also in terms of effective policies and programmes for eliminating violence against women. Knowledge must be strengthened to better understand what works, and why, as well as how multifaceted efforts sustained over time can address the complex sets of factors underpinning gender inequality and the acceptance of violence against women. Much greater efforts and long-term investments are needed to enhance monitoring, knowledge management and the evaluation of the impact of measures taken and results achieved.

### **3. Moving forward: priorities for future action and accelerated implementation**

140. Violence against women and girls remains at unacceptably high levels for several reasons. First, the implementation of national legal and policy frameworks has been slow and uneven and there are many inadequacies, with insufficient enforcement of legislation, poor implementation and the lack of adequate resources. Second, despite increasing efforts, insufficient attention has been focused on preventing the occurrence of violence against women and girls. Finally, persistent dis-

crimination, gender inequality, discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes remain major obstacles to eliminating violence against women.

141. Ensuring the implementation of strong and comprehensive legal and policy frameworks, which address all forms of violence against women in all countries, remains an urgent priority, along with adequate resourcing for implementation. There is a need to strengthen responses by integrating the prevention and response to such violence within broader policy frameworks, such as national development plans, as well as health, education, security and justice policies.

142. In their responses to violence against women, governments have focused mainly on the provision of such immediate services as shelters and helplines, with limited focus on long-term support for enabling women to exercise agency and escape violence, particularly around income generation, education and training. Most services still remain insufficient to meet the demand and there is a need for much greater attention to the accessibility and the quality of services, including through the training of providers and better integration and coordination. States have recognized the underlying causes of violence against women. Accelerating implementation will require comprehensive and long-term strategies for preventing violence against women that address unequal power relations, change attitudes and realize women's human rights in all areas.

143. The lack of attention to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination often means that policies and programmes for combating violence against women are not responsive to the needs and experiences of women. Laws, policies and programmes to address violence against women should specifically address the factors that place marginalized women and girls at particular risk of violence and should create an enabling environment for those groups of women to find support in addressing violence.



144. In recent years there has been increasing attention to such newly emerging forms of violence as cyberbullying and sexual harassment and violence perpetrated by means of information and communications technologies. Other forms of violence are increasingly attracting the attention of governments. These include dating violence, violence against older women, in the workplace, against women in politics, against women in public spaces, against women human rights defenders and against women in the armed forces. The multiple and growing forms of violence against women and the various contexts in which violence occurs underscores the need for comprehensive strategies.

145. The collection and use of data on violence against women is another area requiring urgent attention and States should increase their efforts to collect and report data in accordance with the nine violence against women indicators endorsed by the Statistical Commission. Research on different forms of violence, or on violence experienced by marginalized groups of women, who are difficult to reach with national surveys, is also needed in order to increase the understanding of their experiences and of the effects of violence, as well as to improve policy responses.

## V. UN WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE 2030 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UN Women is a member of the UN Task Team, which was established by the UN Secretary-General in late 2011 to coordinate system-wide preparations for a post-2015 UN development agenda. UN Women has contributed to the Technical Support Team and other working groups which provide substantive and technical support to the Open Working Group (OWG) on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

In its 2013 position paper, UN Women advocated for a stand-alone goal in the post 2015-development agenda, to achieve gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment, one that is grounded in human rights and tackles unequal

power relations. Along with the stand-alone goal, UN Women has called for the integration of gender equality concerns throughout the other priority areas and goals of the post-2015 development agenda, with clear targets and indicators.

SDG 5 embraces three strategic elements, which include **freedom from violence for women and girls**; gender equality in the distribution of capabilities and resources; and gender equality in voice, leadership and participation.

UN Women also advocates with Member States on **integrating gender equality perspectives in the future development agenda**.

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### SDG 5:

**Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**



#### Targets

- **End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere (5.1)**
- **Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (5.2)**
- **Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (5.3)**

The SDGs seek to address key challenges facing women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as poverty, inequality, and **violence against women**.

## Women's empowerment is a pre-condition for this



Deep legal and legislative changes are needed to ensure women's rights around the world. While a record 143 countries guaranteed quality between men and women in their Constitutions by 2014, another 52 had not taken this step. In many nations, gender discrimination is still woven through legal and social norms.

Stark gender disparities remain in economic and political realms. While there has been some progress over the decades, on average women in the labour market still earn 24 per cent less than men globally.<sup>26</sup> As of August 2015, only 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians were female, a slow rise from 11.3 per cent in 1995.<sup>27</sup>



26. UN Women (2015), "Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming economies, realizing rights", Chapter 2.

27. Inter-Parliamentary Union (2015), "Women in National Parliaments."

## FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION



**133 million**

girls and women have experienced female genital mutilation in the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East where the harmful practice is most common

### Impact

Severe emotional and physical trauma; potential health risks, including reproductive and sexual health complications, and possible death through loss of blood or sepsis.

Meanwhile, violence against women is a pandemic affecting all countries, even those that have made laudable progress in other areas. Worldwide, 35 per cent of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or

non-partner sexual violence.<sup>28</sup> UN Women joined the voices of many global actors in pointing out that violence was absent from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

## LAND & OTHER RESOURCES



**In 26 of 143 countries**

statutory inheritance laws (i.e. written laws passed by legislature) differentiate between women and men

### Impact

Increased vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity; limited or no access to resources and credit; dependency on men to secure livelihood.

28. World Health Organization (2013), "Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence", p. 2.

Women have a right to equality in all areas. It must be embedded across legal systems, upheld in both laws and legal practices, including proactive measures such as quotas. Since all areas of life relate to gender equality, efforts must be made to cut the roots of gender discrimination wherever they appear.

Women have a critical role to play in all of the SDGs, with many targets specifically recognizing women's equality and empowerment as both the objective, and as part of the solution. SDG Goal 5 is dedicated to achieving these ends.

See more stories at:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>

## LIST OF RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AND WEBSITES

- UN Women: Ending Violence against Women:  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995):  
[http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa\\_e\\_final\\_web.pdf?v=1&d=20150303T234153](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf?v=1&d=20150303T234153)
- Five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing + 5):  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm>
- Ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing + 10):  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/49sess.htm>
- Fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing + 15)  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/index.html>
- The Beijing Platform for Action Turns 20:  
<http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about>
- Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing + 20)  
<http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/SG%20Report%20of%20Beijing%2020.pdf>
- UN Women Summary Report: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Turns 20:  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/02/beijing-synthesis-report>
- Information regarding the 2015 review and appraisal process, including national reviews of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly:  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/preparations>
- Beijing + 20 Campaign “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it up for Gender Equality”:  
<http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/step-it-up>
- Sustainable Development Goals:  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics>





The following booklet contains relevant sections of the principal international agreements over the past twenty years where countries have committed to responding to violence against women and girls.

These include:

- Area D of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** (1995), a global policy framework and blueprint for action for the empowerment of women and girls;
- the **Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls**, adopted at its fifty-seventh session (2013); and
- the **Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly** (2015).



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