

# EU Statement: United Nations 65th Commission on the Status of Women: Closing Session

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26 March 2021, New York - European Union Statement delivered by Ambassador Günter Sautter, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany, at the Closing session of the 65th Commission on the Status of Women

Mr. Chair.

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

Let me start by expressing our sincere thanks to Mr Na Sang-Deok for his leadership and dedication as facilitator and thank all members of the mission of the Republic of Korea who have played a key role in ensuring today's outcome. We also thank delegations who engaged constructively in the past 5 weeks.

We thank UN Women for their substantive support and constructive engagement in reaching today's consensus. UN Women must continue to play a role as the core UN Entity to advance gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of all women and girls. The EU stands ready to support UN Women in their endeavours, and we will continue to work closely with civil society to reach our joint objective of full gender equality.

In many respects, this session of the Commission on the Status of Women has been historic. It was the first time the session met after the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the first time it met virtually, and the first time that it addressed the link between women and girl's participation and leadership in public life and the elimination of Sexual and gender-based violence.

The agreed conclusions adopted today show the importance of ensuring a human rights-based and gender-responsive COVID-19 recovery, accelerating efforts to achieve gender balance in all spheres of society and eradicate all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

The EU would have preferred to see more ambitious language in these agreed conclusions. The systematic attempts by some delegations to derail the process and question international commitments and obligations on gender equality show that the pushback against women's rights continues. We must all remain vigilant and increase efforts in order to promote and protect gender equality and ensure that women and girls have the same rights and opportunities everywhere.

Women and girls' full, equal, effective and meaningful participation is an unequivocal part of democratic and human rights based governance. Diversity in representation of women and girls –including of all ages, abilities, and ethnic backgrounds – strengthens trust and is a way of leveraging innovation and talent for a gender-equal world.

For these reasons, the EU promotes gender parity in decision-making processes and positions at all levels and in all spheres, as well as the free, equal, and meaningful participation of all women and girls and their organisations in political, economic and public life.

We are committed to working towards women and youth's equal, full, effective and meaningful participation, in all their diversity, in all spheres and levels of public and political life - including by advocating for their inclusion on political parties' lists for winnable seats and building candidates' capacity.

The EU also underlines the necessity to increase women's leadership, participation, and consultation in all policy-making decisions and processes in all areas related to peace and security, in line with landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

Because of intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination, women and girls may be affected differently. Action, including affirmative action where relevant, is needed to promote the full and effective participation of all women and girls in the private and public sector and political life and ensuring all necessary measures, including adequate formal and informal training and educational opportunities in this respect.

We also underline the need for social protection policies that promote the equal sharing of responsibilities of adult family members in unpaid care of dependants and domestic work, and create conditions to fully enjoy all dimensions of life, while acknowledging that, in different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist.

Sexual and gender-based violence constitutes a major violation of human rights, prevents women and girls from the full enjoyment of those rights, and remains one of the largest barriers to their full, equal, effective and meaningful participation in public life. The EU remains committed to its elimination, including through the joint UN-EU Spotlight Initiative, the world's largest targeted effort to end all forms of violence against women and girls, including online and offline violence. The EU reiterates its support for all international and regional conventions and commitments to address violence against women and girls. The international

gender equality framework includes ILO Convention 190 and ILO Recommendation 206 on violence and harassment in the world of work.

The EU calls for an integrated and comprehensive approach tackling violence against women and girls at multiple levels. The EU position puts particular focus on persons in most vulnerable situations in this regard - for instance, young girls and older women, migrants and refugees, indigenous women and ethnic minorities, women and girls living with disabilities, LGBTI persons, and those in conflict settings or humanitarian crises who are at increased risk of violence.

The EU remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICDP) and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The EU further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education and health-care services.

The EU stresses the indispensable role of a thriving and free civil society, in particular women's rights organisations, women-led movements and women human rights defenders in advancing women's and girls' rights and participation and combatting violence. The EU strongly condemns reprisals and violence against women's rights organisations, women human rights defenders as well as women peacebuilders, including those engaging with the UN mechanisms.

The Commission on the Status of Women is based on civil society participation. We would like to thank all EU and international civil society representatives who are leading processes, sometimes at very high risks, for gender equality. This year, the EU and its Member States included civil society representatives in our official delegations and we are committed to continue the practice in the years to come.

Given the discussions of the past month, it is evident beyond all doubt that we need to accelerate and intensify our efforts outside the UN to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Promises are only that. We have seen how easily hard-won gains can be lost. Meaningful and substantial change requires the dedicated commitment of all stakeholders, including civil society, human rights defenders and the private sector; for these reasons we look forward to the upcoming Generation Equality Forum in Mexico and Paris. The Forum will present a vital moment for activists, feminists, youth and allies to achieve transformative change for generations to come. The pushback may stall us here, but it will not impede the overwhelming momentum to keep the promises made in Beijing and reach Generation equality.

Change in these difficult times requires hard work, unity and determination – we once again commend the efforts of all those involved in the adoption of today's Agreed Conclusions and look forward to contributing to the global effort of turning these commitments into action.

Thank you.

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