

UN Geneva Triennial Report 2018-2020

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Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

For the past three years, our representatives participated in almost all the CEDAW sessions from 2018 to 2020, those that took place in Geneva and some that were online.

During these sessions, from the 69th to the 77th, they were able to attend the interventions of many NGOs, all of which have shown very relevant perspectives, focusing on several fundamental issues of women's rights. Many of these interventions relate to the difficulties encountered by minority groups, either indigenous women, discriminated against both by the legislation of their country and by customary law, or trans-, intersex women who are victims of non-recognition and worse still of transphobic violence.

Among the reports of the status of women in different countries, it is interesting to highlight the following countries:

Mexico: has more women participating in the political life, but one of the significant problems is still the sexist patriarchal structure. The vulnerability of migrant women to human trafficking and the lack of social services were mentioned in the report.

Macedonia: Out of a 2 million population 35% are working poor. Domestic violence, no sufficient health protection in everyday life, no health education regarding reproductive health are other major problems. Access to justice is limited for the poor population. The State fails to provide effective legal protection for women who are victims of violence.

Myanmar: The States is said to use sexual violence against the Rohingya women and girls. Rape committed by State security forces are common as well as torture. The State declares that those who are responsible will be prosecuted and punished on one hand, one the other hand it denies the existence of violent practices.

Qatar: has major problems in the coordination between family laws and the requirements of the Convention A review of the legislation of the State will be mandatory as well as identification of laws that are in contradiction with the Convention.

Other NGOs are dedicated to fight to improve health conditions and to allow access to education for girls, to recognizing the right to abortion, to fight against domestic violence, to eradicate genital mutilation and forced marriage.

BPW-International has a role to play too and, as an NGO with a consultative voice, we could present interventions to promote the economic independence of women, to demand equal opportunity and representation in economic, civil and political life, by preparing targeted interventions with the support and evidence dialogue of the BPW Federations or clubs existing in the States Parties presenting their report.

High Commissioner of Human Rights

At a Meeting with the High Commissioner, Michelle Bachelet: she stated clearly that NGOs and Civil Society are agents of change. Regarding the elimination of violence, the UN proposes its help. Nevertheless, governments have to solve their problems by themselves.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Regional Fora: their aim is to share policy solutions, to empower people and to ensure inclusiveness and equality in the UNECE Region – peer learning round tables among all the processes to advance the SDGs

Session: Smart sustainable day of cities, drivers for sustainable development. Exchange of views and knowledge sharing to create the quality of life and the efficiency of urban operation services and competitiveness. I saw some interesting concrete examples.

The Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting of the Economic Commission for Europe, held in Geneva UN headquarters, on 29-30 October 2019

The Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting of the Economic Commission for Europe had the following *objectives*: The key objectives of the meeting were to review the progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the ECE region on the basis of national reports; to identify current challenges; to share good practices and provide direction for effective policies and actions. The discussions also addressed how strategies and policies for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action would contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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

Key messages: Participants stressed the need for comprehensive and coherent policies, strategies and urgent action to promote and protect women's and girls' human rights and fundamental freedoms, mainstream gender perspectives into all policies and programs, ensure women's full and equal participation in policy and decision-making in all processes, including on climate change, the economic empowerment of women including through education, and enhance partnership and international cooperation to catalyze the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Countries made significant efforts to support women's inclusion in the labor force through the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, expanding paternity leave, addressing women's lower employment rates, lower pay and unequal capital income, and addressing vertical and horizontal segregation. Work-family reconciliation was targeted by many countries as a critical means of removing barriers to women's labor force participation. Gender equality and women's economic empowerment as a means for poverty reduction and decent work was underscored as critical for many countries. The participation of women in the labor market is unequal and is accompanied by significant occupational and sectoral segregation. These gender differences are the expression of other inequalities, in particular, in the sharing of unpaid work. Regarding the gender pay gap, the meeting focused on existing practices and tools to collect and reveal data on wage differences, and on mechanisms to address unequal remuneration for work of equal value. While it is shrinking in most countries, the pace of change remains slow. Even in countries with a high degree of gender equality, it is proving hard to eliminate gender differences in pay. The Panelists and participants reiterated the need for sufficient financing as one of the biggest barriers to advance women's empowerment.

The Multi-Stakeholder Hearing - Accelerating the Realization of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls, held online, on 21 July 2020.

The themes and sub-themes of the interactive panel discussions were:

- Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment: drivers for sustainable development,
- Women's and girls' voices, participation and leadership,
- Achieving gender equality is everyone's responsibility.

Key messages: In recent years progress has been uneven and even stalled in some areas. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to halt or reverse the gains of decades of collective effort on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, women and girls have been disproportionately affected. The gender gap in labor force participation has stagnated over the past 20 years, and the majority of employed women work in the informal economy. Women and girls are disproportionately responsible for unpaid care and domestic work, and women are more likely than men to live in extreme poverty. Women still hold only a quarter of seats in single or lower houses of parliament around the world, and reports of attacks on women in political and public life are increasing. Violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres remains pervasive. Despite shrinking civic space, stakeholders all over the world had inspired by women's movements and energized by youth activists, and are mobilizing to accelerate progress and achieve systemic change.

2018 to 2020 International Labor Organization (ILO) Sessions

The three ILO Meetings were discussing the importance of employment and decent work for peace and resilience stressing the needs of women and young workers. A special promotion programs and social protection coverages were highlighted. The session of 2019 marked the 100th anniversary of ILO with a major participation of Heads of State. During this session the very important convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work was adopted by the conference at its 108 session in Geneva on June 21, 2019. The Convention was accepted by all three bodies and is already ratified by several states. As it is extending the protection also to workers in the informal workforce, it is a real protection also for migrant workers.