

BRIEFING PAPER

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Summary of Agreed Conclusions for CSW57

Priority Theme - Elimination and Prevention of all forms of Violence against Women and Girls

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a Commission of the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

It is the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women. Representatives from the Governments of the Member States meet annually at the UN Headquarters in New York. The purpose of CSW is to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide.

Priority themes are identified, with the Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls being discussed in 2013.

The main output from CSW is the agreed conclusions (ACs), which contain an assessment of progress, as well as gaps and challenges. They contain concrete recommendations for action by Governments, intergovernmental bodies and other institutions, as well as society overall, to be implemented at a local, national and international level.

The UK Government represents the 4 nations at CSW. To ensure that Scotland had a voice at the proceedings, the SWC produced a report around the issues of VAW in Scotland.

Organisations representing Scotland at CSW57 included the SWC, Soroptimist International, Scottish Women's Aid, Scottish Episcopal Church, YWCA and WAGGs. They participated in parallel events, lobbied international partner organisations and supported UK Government officials. This partnership working contributed to the overall impact of the Agreed Conclusions.

This document provides an overview of the agreement signed at the 57th session of CSW.

Findings of the Commission

The Commission affirmed the following:

- The importance of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**). This Convention, which the UK is part of, provides an international legal framework and a set of measures for the elimination and prevention of all forms of discrimination against women.
- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is rooted in **historical and structural inequality** between men and women and exists in every country in the world. It is characterised by the use and abuse of power and control and is linked with gender stereotypes.
- VAWG 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.

CSW **strongly condemns all forms of VAWG**. It urges Member States to do the same, stressing the obligation on Governments to use all appropriate measures to promote and protect the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of women and girls.

- There are clear links between VAWG and other issues, such as education, health, poverty eradication and economic empowerment.
- **Older women** can be vulnerable and face a particular risk of violence, which Governments must address.
- There must be, at the highest levels of Government, **organisations and bodies which work towards the advancement of women**. These must be provided with the necessary funding and resources to be able to function effectively.

CSW recognises that progress towards the elimination of VAWG has been made. However, challenges still remain, particularly around:

- Insufficient gender-sensitive policies;
- Inadequate implementation of policies etc to tackle VAWG;
- Not enough data, analysis and research on VAWG; and
- A lack of financial and human resources to work in the field of VAWG.

Existing efforts are not always coordinated, consistent, sustained or transparent. There are also concerns that there is not enough monitoring and evaluation of policies, practices etc.

STRENGTHENING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- The Commission urges States to **adopt and review legislation** to criminalise VAWG.
- **Domestic Violence (DV)** should be addressed and eliminated as a matter of priority. This should be achieved via laws which prohibit DV, set out punishment for the crime and create adequate legal protection for victims and survivors.
- Women and girls must be given **unimpeded access to justice** and effective legal assistance to make informed decisions about their legal options. They should be entitled to access *“just and effective”* remedies for the harm they have suffered.
- Governments should review and revise all laws, policies, practices etc that discriminate or have a discriminatory impact on women and girls.
- A **gender perspective** should be placed in all legislation, policies etc in order to address discrimination and violence against women and girls.
- Women should be involved, on an equal basis, in all spheres of **political life and decision making**. Effective steps must be taken in order to ensure this happens.
- Commitments to tackle **Human Trafficking** must be underlined and strengthened. VAWG is a direct consequence of transnational organised crime, including Human Trafficking. Specific policies to prevent and eradicate this crime should be adopted.

There are a number of root factors which contribute to the **Human Trafficking** of women and girls. Appropriate measures to establish these should be taken, as well as:

- Strengthening legislation to provide improved protection of the rights of women and girls;
- Taking appropriate measures to ensure that identified victims of trafficking are not penalised for having been trafficked;
- Improving public awareness, education and training to discourage the demand for exploitation; and
- Providing identified victims with appropriate protection and care, including rehabilitation and re-integration into society, job training, health care etc.

- The **private sector** must be involved in programmes, campaigns and strategies to respond to, prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and VAWG.
- Public officials and professionals, including the judiciary, police, those working in healthcare, education, social welfare, justice, defence and immigration, should be given training and education in order to strengthen their capacity to deal with VAWG.

ADDRESSING THE STRUCTURAL AND UNDERLYING CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS SO AS TO PREVENT VAWG

The **full and equal participation** of women in the formal economy should be promoted, in particular in economic decision-making, as well as equal access to full employment and decent work.

- Women in the informal sector should be empowered;
- Women and girls should enjoy equal treatment in the workplace, as well as equal pay for work of equal value;
- It is vital that women have equal access to power and decision-making; and
- The sharing of paid and unpaid work between women and men must be promoted.

- Governments should design and implement policies with the aim of **transforming social norms which condone VAWG**, as well as working to counteract attitudes that women and girls are in any way 'subordinate' to men and boys. Stereotypical roles that perpetuate these attitudes must be challenged.
- Age-appropriate **education programmes** and teaching materials on human sexuality, based on full and accurate information, should be developed and implemented. These should serve to promote informed decision-making, communication and risk-reduction for the development of respectful relationships.
- **Awareness raising and education campaigns** which target the public, across all forms of communication, to address the structural and underlying causes of VAWG should be carried out. This opportunity could be used to overcome gender stereotypes and promote zero tolerance.
- Gender sensitive measures, which promote the understanding and recognition that **caregiving** is a "*critical societal function*", should be developed and implemented. The sharing of responsibilities between women and men across the board must be encouraged.
- The right of women to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on their **sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health**, must be recognised. This should be done without coercion, discrimination or violence.
- **Men and boys** need to be educated, engaged and encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, including their sexual and reproductive behaviour, and be made aware of the harmful impact of VAWG.
- Support policies and programmes are necessary for children and young people, especially young women, who have experienced or witnessed domestic or sexual abuse, including protection within the justice system.
- The **media** has a huge role to play in the elimination of gender stereotypes, including those perpetuated by adverts. They have the potential to promote non-discrimination and carry out gender sensitive reporting. The media must not present women as inferior beings, or exploit women as sexual objects. They should present women and girls as creative human beings who are key in development and decision making.
- Measures should be taken to ensure that all **workplaces** are free from discrimination and exploitation, violence, sexual harassment and bullying.

STRENGTHENING MULTISECTORAL SERVICES, PROGRAMMES AND RESPONSES TO VAWG

Governments should establish **multisectoral services and programmes for all victims** and survivors of all forms of VAWG, based on their needs. These must be adequately resourced, effective and coordinated, with input from the police, justice system, legal aid services, health services, shelters, counselling services, immigration, housing, healthcare etc.

Victims and survivors also require assistance, protection and support for access to long-term housing, education, employment and economic opportunities.

These should be coordinated through the establishment of referral processes between services, while ensuring the confidentiality and safety of victims and survivors.

IMPROVING THE EVIDENCE BASE

- **Research and analysis** on the root causes, as well as the cost of and risk factors associated with VAWG should be carried out on a regular basis.
- Data and statistics (with and age/gender breakdown) should be produced, at local and national levels, on different forms of discrimination and VAWG. These should explore the causes and consequences of VAWG, including the health and economic costs to society.
- Governments should introduce or review monitoring mechanisms to evaluate and assess policies and programmes.

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded to engage with women throughout Scotland in order that their views might influence public policy.

This is achieved in a number of different ways - through roadshow, round table, conference and celebratory events. Following each event a report is compiled and issued to women who attend and relevant policy and decision makers.

The SWC uses the views of women to respond to Scottish and UK Government consultation papers.

www.scottishwomensconvention.org