

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT

**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPporteur ON VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN, ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES**

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65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

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*Excellences,
Distinguished delegates,
Chairperson,*

It is an honour for me to address you for the last time in my capacity as UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, **a mandate that was established in 1994 to send a clear message that violence against women is a human rights violation. The mandate was entrusted to recommend measures for elimination of violence against women at national, regional and International level, and is also invited to cooperate closely with the Commission on the Status of Women.**

Since the beginning of my tenure in 2015, I have visited 11 States¹ and elaborated country specific reports with action oriented recommendations to Governments on the elimination of violence against women in line with their international human rights commitments.

I have also elaborated 10 thematic reports, including: a vision setting report (2016); the modalities for establishing a Femicide Watch (2016); adequacy of the international framework on violence against women (2017); human rights-based approach to integrated services and protection measures on violence against women, with a focus on shelters and protection orders a (2017); online violence against women (2018); violence against women in politics (2018); analysis of 25 years of the mandate (2019); violence against women in reproductive health services with a focus on childbirth and obstetric violence (2019); violence against women journalists (2020); and the intersection between the COVID-19 pandemic and the pandemic of gender based violence against women (2020).

All of these thematic reports address different manifestations of violence against women and girls. These reports are shared with the Commission on the Status of Women in line with Human Rights Council Resolution 7/24², however unfortunately **they are not fully utilized as violence against women is not a standing agenda item of this Commission.**

Today I would like to highlight two of my reports that are particularly relevant to this session. The first is my 2020 report on the intersection between the COVID-19 pandemic and the pandemic of gender based violence against women, which was based on 275 submissions from a variety of stakeholders. This double pandemic has led to an alarming increase in cases of violence against women, especially domestic violence and femicide. It has also exposed pre-existing structural gender inequalities and the failure of Governments to combat violence against women.

The second is my 2018 report (A/73/301) on violence against women in politics, which specifically relates to the Commissions priority theme for this year. My report provides specific recommendations to States, Parliaments, political parties and electoral bodies, and calls for laws,

¹ *Bulgaria and Ecuador (2019); Canada and Nepal (2018); Australia and Bahamas (2017); Argentina, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel (2016); Georgia and South Africa (2015)*

² A/HRC/RES/7/24. Para. 12

policies, complaint mechanisms and codes of conduct to address sexism, sexual harassment and violence against women in politics and public life.

Distinguished delegates,

In 2015, I started a femicide watch prevention initiative that has allowed me to monitor progress by States in addressing this issue each year. An increasing number of States have also been submitting femicide data to my mandate, revealing that more than 80 % of victims of intimate partner femicides are women. **Despite this progress, much remains to be done to ensure the establishment of femicide prevention watches and the prevention of femicides in all States.**

Chairperson

My next and final thematic report to the Human Rights Council, in 2021 will address the prevention of rape as a human rights violation, a crime and a manifestation of gender-based violence against women and girls, both in peace and in conflict, with focus on States' responsibility to prevent it, to change the prevalent rape culture or culture of impunity for perpetrators and stigmatization of victims.

I am grateful to all of the 206 submissions received that reveal many shortcomings at the national level. For example, there are a number of UN Member States that have exemptions with respect to the criminalization of marital rape, what is violation of international human right standards. I call on all of those States to repeal such provisions.

I also call on States to harmonize definitions of rape with international human rights standards, and to explicitly include lack of consent at its centre.

Furthermore, I urge States to abolish statutes of limitation for the prosecution of rape in conflict and in peace and to accelerate the harmonisation of their laws on rape with international standards. I am also preparing a Framework for Model Rape Law, which will be annexed to my report.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me briefly mention another long term initiative of the mandate, the establishment of the EDVAW Platform, which is composed of 7 UN and regional independent expert women's rights mechanism.³ Since its inception in 2016, the Platform has issued 9 joint statements.

With push back movements against women's human rights standards emerging in a growing number of States, for example against the Istanbul Convention, the role of independent women's human rights mechanisms is more important than ever since we are established to

³ SRVAW; CEDAW; WGDAW; MESECVI; GREVIO; IA SR WHR; A SR WHR

monitor the implementation of these human rights instruments and to push back against push back movements.

On 17 March, the EDVAW Platform will hold a high level panel, with the participation of the President of the General Assembly. I invite you all to participate in this event and to interact with expert mechanisms on these issues.

We are launching two EDVAW Platform booklets: one on the EDVAW Platform and the Beijing Platform for Action; and the second on the EDVAW Platform and the CSW, which calls for a human rights based approach and expanded cooperation between expert mechanisms and the Commission.

We also call for **the inclusion of violence against women as a standing item on the CSW agenda.**

Finally, I wish to thank you for the cooperation and support extended to me during the past 6 years of what has been both a very challenging and highly rewarding mandate.

Thank you