

Madame Chair,

Allow me to start by emphasizing the importance of CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. While we are pleased to note how many states have ratified CEDAW, we remain deeply concerned by the high number of reservations and call upon those States which have made reservations incompatible with the purposes and objective of the treaty, to immediately withdraw them.

Madame Chair,

Violence against women and girls can neither be tolerated nor condoned. It comes with a price, first and foremost for the individual concerned, but also for society as a whole. Eradicating such violence should be a priority for every government.

We should place particular emphasis on eliminating domestic violence, the most prevalent form of violence against women and girls. It affects women across the world of all backgrounds and social strata. Legislation prohibiting domestic violence needs to be in place, prescribing punitive measures as well as providing adequate legal protection to victims.

In Iceland we have adopted the so-called “Austrian Model”, providing the police with authorisation to remove the perpetrator of domestic violence from the home and issuing restraining orders. The purpose is to provide protection for victims of domestic violence. We are concerned over how seldom this measure has been applied and need to explore ways to strengthen the implementation to make the home a safe place as intended by the law.

Violence against women and girls is of concern not only to women but to all. Men and boys need to be powerful agents of change in the fight against violence against women by speaking out and by consistently condemning such violence. They have a responsibility to take the lead to influence their peers. The perpetrators of violence should not be able to shield behind the taboo of the issue. We need to break the silence surrounding violence against women and put the shame and guilt where it belongs, with the perpetrators, not the survivors. Silence is the best friend of impunity and it needs to be broken.

We would be amiss in addressing violence against women if we did not mention women living in conflict zones around the world, including in the DRC and in Syria, as well as Palestinian women living under occupation. Here we call for full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions.

Madame Chair,

Iceland has for the past years been among the top countries on the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index. We are proud of the progress made in advancing gender equality. In this context we recognise the crucial role of civil society in advocating for as well as promoting and protecting women’s rights. At the same time we fully acknowledge the numerous challenges we still face, especially with implementation. We need concerted efforts at all levels to overcome these challenges.

In Iceland particular emphasis has been placed on comprehensive sexuality education focusing on empowering adolescents and youth to set boundaries. Campaign to this effect called “Get to YES” was recently launched in all high-schools and on the internet. An important feature of the campaign is to respect the right of young people to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The campaign has received attention far beyond the school system but its aim is to counter gender based violence and the effects of increased exposure by young people to violent porn on the internet.

On this latest subject, the Government is currently looking into the possibility of placing restrictions on online distribution of violent and degrading pornography in Iceland. Under discussions are both technical solutions and legal and procedural measures.

Madame Chair,

We do not need new norms. We need to put laws, policies and incentives in place on the basis of the commitments we have all agreed to. We need implementation and tangible results on the ground.

Thank you, Madame Chair