Side event: Violence Against Women and the Achievement of Economic Empowerment

Commission on the Status of Women 61

Date: March 15th
Time: 8:15AM-9:30AM
Place: UNHQ/Express Bar-level 3

Co-Sponsored by the governments of Fiji, Namibia, Belgium and the International Planned Parenthood Federation/ Western Hemisphere.

Background

Violence against women is defined as “any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Achieving gender equality means eradicating all forms of discrimination against women and removing structural inequalities that prevent women and girls from realizing their rights. Sexual and gender-based violence results from and perpetuates harmful gender norms and cuts across all aspects of the development of women and girls. From intimate partner violence and other family violence, to female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage, and violence as a weapon of war, it is a major public health concern in all corners of the world, a barrier to women’s empowerment and gender equality, and a constraint on individual and societal development, with high economic costs.

The priority theme for the 61st Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is ‘women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work’. The relationship between women’s economic empowerment and violence against women and girls (VAWG) is an important one. For example, economic empowerment can help women and girls avoid and escape from violence and violent situations. Women who face violence may be less likely to access economic empowerment, by way of finding and staying in
work, accessing income and assets. However, homes, workplaces (both formal and informal) as well as journeys to work can be sites of violence, and women who gain economic power sometimes face a backlash from their partners or community. Moreover, gaps in the implementation of laws and policies and a lack of regulation across the informal economy, means that the legal and policy frameworks designed to protect women from violence often fall short and leave women vulnerable to violence and without adequate redress mechanisms.

Objective

The purpose of this side event is to bring together a cross-regional group of countries to foster dialogue and share experiences of both good practice and challenges from countries' perspectives. The side event will examine the implementation of national policies that aim to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls. Against this backdrop, countries will also discuss their progress against Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment and eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in both public and private spheres. The panel will also include representatives from civil society who will share their perspectives as program implementers at the national and sub-national levels. Panelists will also share ideas on how to best continue to implement successful policies to fight violence against women and how failure to eliminate violence against women impacts the achievement of women’s economic empowerment.

Participants

The high-level event will be moderated by the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation of Fiji, Hon. Mereseini Vuniwaqa, speakers include, Special rapporteur on violence against women, Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare of the Republic of Namibia Hon. Doreen Sioka, the Permanent Representative to the United Nations of the Kingdom of Belgium, Mr. Marc Pecsteen, the Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Mrs. Nazhat Shameem, as well as a senior expert on violence against women from the International Planned Parenthood Federation. The panel will be followed by a Q&A session. Breakfast will be served.

Program

8:15 – 8:20: Introductions by moderator
8:20 – 8:27: Intervention by Minister of gender Namibia
8:28 – 8:35: Intervention by Permanent Representative for the Kingdom of Belgium
8:36 – 8:43: Intervention by Permanent Representative of Fiji to the UN Office in Geneva
8:44 – 8:51: Intervention by Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women
8:52 – 9:09: Intervention by IPPF/WHR expert
9:10 – 9:25 Q & A
9:25 – 9:30: Moderator closing