



Commission on the Status of Women – 63rd Session

Side Event

Invitation to a panel discussion on

“Advancing Gender Equality and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: the role of National Human Rights Institutions”

13 March 2019, 4:45-6:00 PM

United Nations Headquarters – Conference Room A

Background

Globally, gender inequality persists in all countries, constraining progress towards peace, development, and the realization of human rights. Member States have recognized the critical importance of Gender Equality to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through a dedicated transformative goal on Gender Equality, and the integration of gender in other Goals and Targets, including specific targets for the achievement of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) under Goals 3 and 5. At national level, many countries have adopted progressive legislation on Gender Equality, the elimination of violence against women and different types of harmful practices, while other countries have in place policy frameworks to fight gender inequality and eliminate violence against women and harmful practices.

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), as state bodies with a constitutional or legislative mandate to protect and promote human rights, have a unique role in advancing national accountability on sexual and reproductive health and rights and Gender Equality, as well as supporting governments to meet their commitments under the SDGs. NHRIs also have a role to play in addressing sensitive issues such as sexual rights and access to abortion. A global survey conducted jointly by UNFPA and the Danish Institute for Human Rights and a regional survey conducted by the Asia Pacific Forum revealed that while NHRIs considered reproductive rights as part of their mandate, and saw issues such as freedom from sexual violence and discrimination and family planning as key areas for engagement, some had limited experience in promoting and protecting these rights, and others were reluctant to engage on particularly sensitive issues such as rape in marriage, access to abortion, and access to contraception outside marriage.

To address this gap, in 2012, the Eleventh International Conference of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Amman, committed NHRIs to protect and promote reproductive rights without any discrimination, build the evidence base for the exercise of SRHR, review national laws and regulations relating to reproductive rights and promote measures to ensure access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services. The Amman Declaration and Programme of Action established key principles that guide NHRIs work on reproductive



rights, including to conduct inquiries into and investigate violations of women's and girls' human rights, monitor and encourage the implementation of commitments by UN intergovernmental bodies including the CSW, and prioritize and promote the human rights of women and girls through their engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms, and global processes, including the ICPD.

Building on the efforts of NHRIs to promote Gender Equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights in their national contexts, including through sharing experiences and good practices, is therefore critical to advancing the protection and promotion of these rights. Against this backdrop, this high-level panel discussion will convene National Human Rights Institutions and Member States to discuss the role of NHRIs in protecting and promoting Gender Equality and SRHR, and share experiences and lessons learned. In light of the universal nature of the SDGs and of human rights standards and commitments, this discussion will include experiences from both developed and developing country contexts.

Objectives

The main objective of the panel discussion is to consider the role of NHRIs in advancing Gender Equality and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, including:

- How can National Human Rights Institutions play a stronger role in advancing Gender Equality and SRHR, including for the most vulnerable and marginalized women?
- How can NHRIs contribute to achieving the SDGs, in particular key targets under Goal 5 on Gender Equality, including SDG Target 5.6 on SRHR?
- What examples of good practice and lessons learned are available from NHRIs in different regional and country contexts?

The event will also be an opportunity to launch the UNFPA Guide for NHRIs conducting national inquiries and country assessments on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

Agenda

Opening remarks:

- H.E. Mr. Kaha Imnadze - Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations

Key Note:

- Dereje Wordofa – UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme)

Panelists:

- Hon. Karen Lucia S. Gomez-Dumpit - Commissioner of the Philippines' Commission on Human Rights
- Ekaterine Skhiladze - Deputy Public Defender of Georgia



- Dr. Sima Samar - Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF) and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)
- Sara Donnelly Clegg - Legal and Research Officer of Northern Ireland's Human Rights Commission

Moderator:

- Florence Simbiri-Jaoko - Special Envoy of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)

Closing remarks:

- Dr. Julia Lehmann - Head of Division for Human Rights, Gender and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

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