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64th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Statement by Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

9 March 2020, New York

Excellences Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am saddened that I cannot address you all at this 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in line with the Human Rights Council Resolution no. 7/24 and as per usual practice¹, because of the outbreak of COVID-19 and the measures adopted to contain it. I appreciate however the opportunity to circulate my written statement outlining a number of dimensions that this Commission should consider in its review of the Beijing Platform of Action 25 years after its adoption during the Fourth World Conference on Women.

At the time of the Beijing Fourth World Conference, only two UN independent expert monitoring mechanisms on women's human rights were in place. The first one was the UN CEDAW Committee, established to monitor the implementation of the CEDAW Convention, and the second was the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (SRVAW), created in 1994 to send the message that **violence against women is a human rights violation** and recommend measures on the elimination of violence against women, its causes and consequences.

The Beijing Platform for Action specifically referred to this mandate and *“urged States to cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur on violence against women in the performance of her mandate, to furnish all information requested, to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women when her term ends and, if warranted, to update and strengthen it.”*

In addition, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women has been entrusted by Human Rights Council Resolution no. 7/24 to operate within the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Declaration

¹ In its paragraph 12, the resolution requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the reports by the SRVAW are brought to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women and requests the Special Rapporteur to present an oral report annually to the Commission. (A/HRC/RES/7/24).



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on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of this mandate in XXX **and as a contribution to the 25-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**, I submitted a report to the Human Rights Council which provides an analysis of the mandate's evolution, current challenges and the way forward -" (A/HRC/41/42).

In this report, I included recommendations for the BPA review process and for the **Commission on the Status of Women**; therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to recall some of those recommendations, for your further consideration:

- Include violence against women as a standing item on the agenda of the CSW;
- Introduce a constructive dialogue between the Special Rapporteur and the Commission during the oral presentation of the mandate holder;
- Establish a UN system-wide and coordinated approach to prevent and combat violence against women;
- Elaborate a global implementation plan to eliminate violence against women;
- Support cooperation between the Special Rapporteur and the CEDAW Committee on developing guidelines on the implementation of general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women;
- Update and implement national action plans on violence against women in line with the CEDAW general recommendation No. 35;
- Establish a femicide watch or observatories on violence against women, in line with the report of the Special Rapporteur (A/71/398) and general recommendation No. 35;
- Develop indicators on target 5.2 of the Goals, on femicide rates, and on the number of shelters and protection orders;
- Establish cooperation between the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, in line with General Assembly Resolution no. 50/166 (A/RES/50/166).;
- Facilitate collaboration between the Special Rapporteur and the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in armed conflict, as well as the Victims' Rights Advocate;

- Adopt a General Assembly Resolution, or other appropriate measures, to institutionalize the Platform of independent expert UN and regional mechanisms on the elimination of discrimination and violence against women – the EDVAW Platform;
- Include the Special Rapporteur and other relevant independent mechanisms in the development of initiatives to eliminate violence against women, such as the Spotlight Initiative, as a means of ensuring the sustainability of their results;
- Allocate adequate human and financial resources to support the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

I have participated in two important regional reviews processes: the Beijing +25 Regional Review Meeting, held by the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) on 29 and 30 October, 2019, in Geneva; as well as the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, held by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) from 27 to 29 November, 2019, in Bangkok, Thailand.

In both meetings, **violence against women was identified as a priority concern**, requiring urgent measures to address it. It is important to note that some of the contributions by my mandate are reflected in the outcome document of the UNECE regional review.²

Mr. Chairperson,

In my vision setting report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/32/42 and Corr.1) in 2016, I called for stronger cooperation between independent UN and regional expert mechanisms dealing with women's rights and violence against women and started an initiative to institutionalize such cooperation between the following mechanisms:

- UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
- Working Group on discrimination against women and girls
- Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention

² ECE/AC.48/2019/2. The Section on *Ending violence against women and girls: lessons and solutions from the region* (paragraph 27.) concluded that: “Stronger links should be made between the Istanbul Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its General recommendation No 35, the new ILO Violence and Harassment Convention of 2019 (No.190) and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights in the implementation of international commitments by all national actors. These international instruments not only guide legislative change, but also lead to changes in practice”.

- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Rapporteur on the Rights of Women
- Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa

This initiative, financially supported by the Governments of South Korea, Spain and Switzerland, resulted in the formation of the Platform of independent expert mechanisms on the elimination of discrimination and violence against women – the EDVAW Platform.

It is important to mention that this initiative has received the early support of the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who has met twice with the Platform experts. . His call for pushing back against the pushbacks during the last session of the CSW was heard throughout the world and was echoed by the EDVAW Platform in its joint statement: “Independent women human rights mechanisms are part of the solution to ‘push back the pushbacks and keep pushing back’.”³

This year, the EDVAW Platform has prepared a publication “*25 years in review of the Beijing Platform for Action: Contributions of the Platform of independent expert mechanisms on discrimination and violence against women towards its implementation*”. **The publication has been sent to all Permanent Missions today and is available on my mandate’s website.**⁴

The main message of this e-booklet is that the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and other review processes **should recognize the indispensable role of and fundamental contributions to its implementation by the seven independent human rights expert mechanisms** mandated to recommend implementation of measures needed to close that gap between commitments on elimination of discrimination and violence against women

My mandate had planned to host today a High-Level Panel⁵ to take stock of the work of this Platform and discuss it. In addition to presenting an overview of the results of the Platform mechanisms, **this side event also sought to engage new supporters of this initiative. Although this event is no longer taking place, I hope that the call for support to institutionalize the Platform will yield promptly results.**

³ Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24380&LangID=E>

⁴ For more information, visit:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/CooperationGlobalRegionalMechanisms.aspx>

⁵ The High-Level Panel: “**Taking Stock of the Platform of independent human rights mechanisms on the elimination of discrimination and violence against women EDVAW Platform: Results, Lessons Learned and contributions to the BPA + 25 review**”.



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Mr. Chairperson,

Let me provide you with an update of my other activities of 2019 and plans for 2020. Between October and November 2019, I conducted country visits to Bulgaria and Ecuador, undertaking a thorough review of each country's legislation, institutions and policy framework aimed at the elimination of violence against women in its many manifestations. I will present reports on my findings and recommendations in the upcoming Human Rights Council session, to be held in June 2020 in Geneva.

Also last year, I presented to the General Assembly a report on mistreatment and violence against women in reproductive health services with a focus on childbirth or obstetric violence. Women's movement to "Break the Silence" brought to light numerous testimonies of this type of violence and raised visibility of the problem, while my report framed such mistreatment as a type of gender-based violence against women and a human rights violation. In it, I recalled States' obligation to respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights, including the right to the highest standard attainable of physical and mental health during reproductive services and childbirth, free from mistreatment and gender-based violence.⁶

Mr. Chairperson,

My next report will focus on violence against women journalists, and you are all invited to provide contributions in line with the call for submissions published on my mandate's website.⁷

Mr. Chairperson,

Among the many manifestations of violence against women, sexual violence and rape remain some of the most egregious. The rise of popular movements, such as #MeToo and #NiUnaMenos, and their various manifestations across the world, has broken the silence on sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence, while calling for urgent change. To contribute to this process, in my upcoming report to the General Assembly I will tackle the issue of rape and sexual violence as gender-based violence against women and a human rights violation.

Mr. Chairperson,

I have made the prevention of femicide one of my priorities. In 2015, I launched the Femicide Watch initiative and called all States to establish a "femicide watch" or observatory. In my 2016 Report to the UN General Assembly, I provided recommendations on the modalities for

⁶ A/74/137.

⁷ Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/VAWJournalists.aspx>



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establishment of Femicide Watches and the collection of comparable data by States and other stakeholders under the **following categories: (i) intimate partner femicide, or gender related killing of women and girls (ii) family-related femicide or gender related killing of women and girls ; and (iii) other femicide or gender related killing of women and girls** .⁸ I am also very glad that on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 30 States, NGOs and Ombudspersons reported femicide data to the mandate under those categories.

This initiative has received the support of the Economic Commission for Europe that, in the aforementioned outcome document on the BPA +25 review, recommended that: “(i) **All countries should establish multidisciplinary national bodies such as “Femicide Watch” with the aim to actively work on prevention of femicide or gender-related killing of women.**”

Mr. Chairperson,

There is a solid institutional and legal framework for meeting the pending commitments of Beijing. My mandate is part of this framework; and I will continue to reach out to all mechanisms, agencies and institutions to ensure that we speak in one voice when we address women’s most urgent needs and challenges. I call on all of you to join me in this effort.

⁸ A/71/398.