



## 12th Meeting of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW Platform)

16 March 2022

14:00 – 18:00 (CET)

*Owing to the COVID-19 outbreak and the measures adopted to contain it, the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Platform of Independent Expert mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against women took place online.*

Participants / Experts	
Name	Position
Iris Luarasi	President of the EDVAW Platform and President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Council of Europe (GREVIO)
Melissa Upreti	Chair of the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (WGDAW)
Genoveva Tischeva	Chair of the Working Group on Violence against Women of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Reem Alsalam (excused)	UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences (SRVAW)
Marcela Huaita (excused)	President of Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI)
Julissa Mantilla Falcón (excused)	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Rapporteur for Women's Rights (RWR-IACHR)
Janet R. Sallah Njie (excused)	Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa (SR RWA)

### Supporting Staff

Name	Organisation
Caroline Harvey	OHCHR/CEDAW
Elif Sariaydin	GREVIO
Fabio Balestro	MESECVI
Federica Donati	OHCHR
Hannah Wu	OHCHR/SRVAW/WGDAW
Johanna Nelles	GREVIO
Liza Sekaggya	OHCHR
Louise Morlon	GREVIO
Luz Patricia Mejia	MESECVI
Renata Preturlan	OHCHR/SRVAW
Rosa Kim	OHCHR

## Meeting Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda and order of business
3. Updates since the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EDVAW Platform
4. Exchange of views with H.E. Marie Fontanel, President of the Committee to the Parties of the Istanbul Convention and Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe, on the role of state parties in supporting implementation of the women's rights framework at regional and international level
5. Feedback on the EDVAW Platform side event "Building a common front against the digital dimension of violence against women"
6. Feedback on the awareness raising briefings for civil society organisations
7. Thematic discussion on the digital dimension of violence against women: Connecting the women's rights field with the cybercrime field
  - a. *Presentation of the Council of Europe study on "Protecting women and girls from violence in the digital age – The relevance of the Istanbul Convention and the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime in addressing online and technology-facilitated violence against women" by the Secretariat of GREVIO*
  - b. *Tour de table: Presentation of initiatives, reports and findings from the various Platform members*
  - c. Action points and follow-up
8. Thematic discussion on the use of the so-called Parental Alienation Syndrome and related concepts around the globe
  - a. Exchange of experience and findings
  - b. Action points and follow-up
9. Dates for the next meeting
10. Other business

## ***Meeting summary***

### **3. Updates since the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EDVAW Platform**

- ✓ Joint Statement on International Women's Day published on 8 March that calls on States to reaffirm the existing legal frameworks and to allocate greater efforts towards their effective implementation,
- ✓ Presentation of the new EDVAW Platform flyer in English, French and Spanish (other UN official languages will be available shortly).

### **4. Exchange of views with H.E. Marie Fontanel President of the Committee to the Parties of the Istanbul Convention and Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe**

H.E. Marie Fontanel, President of the Committee to the Parties of the Istanbul Convention and Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe, presented the role of state parties in supporting implementation of the women's rights framework at regional and international level. She referred to the primary role in ensuring dialogue between state parties to the Istanbul Convention which the Committee of the Parties ensures. It formally adopts recommendations to state parties indicating the measures to be taken by the state concerned in order to implement GREVIO's findings under the baseline evaluation. It thus makes the follow-up mechanism effective. In general, she stated that states parties are the actors who can effectively promote international treaties for women's rights and the monitoring mechanisms that accompany them.

The Ambassador also referred to the feminist foreign policy that France has been pursuing since 2018, including on the basis of an international Strategy for equality between women and men. France's international advocacy for equality has seen two significant events, notably in 2019 with The Biarritz Partnership under the French Presidency of the G7 in 2019 and the 2021 Generation Equality Forum as examples of activities borne out of this approach.

### **5. Feedback on the EDVAW Platform side event "Building a common front against the digital dimension of violence against women"**

The EDVAW Platform organised a side event on 15 March on building a common front against the digital dimension of violence against women on the margins of the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The event featured Ilze Brands Kehris (United Nations Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights), Iris Luarasi (President of the EDVAW Platform and President of GREVIO), Janet Sallah Njie (SRRWA) and Marcela Huaita (President of MESECVI), Zita Gurmai (General Rapporteur on Violence Against Women from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) and Navina Mutabazi (Programme Coordinator of an African NGO called Pollicy).

The side event was an important opportunity to recall the importance of continuous dialogue between the international and regional mechanisms that work on digital violence against women and girls, but also between civil society bodies and tech companies. Regional and international legal frameworks should be used for the protection of women and girls online. The need to raise awareness, including through co-operation and good practice exchanges between all actors, but also through research and education, emanated as a theme.

The event was followed by a total of 115 participants and feedback was very positive.

### **6. Feedback on the awareness raising briefings for civil society organisations**

The EDVAW Platform members took part in several awareness raising briefings with civil society organisations on 15 March. These were organised in partnership with the NGO Committee on the

Status of Women (CSW NGO/NY), which represent over 40.000 civil society bodies. The sessions were divided by time zone: GREVIO and the African Human Rights system in the morning and MESECVI and IACHR in the afternoon. Platform members agreed on the usefulness of such exchanges, with around 70 participants per session.

It was proposed to organise such exchanges on a regular basis during the CSW weeks, particularly by theme. This approach would make it possible for NGOs and civil society to become more familiar with the work done by the Platform members on a particular topic.

## **7. Thematic discussion on the digital dimension of violence against women**

Introducing this agenda item, a member of the Secretariat of GREVIO presented the Council of Europe's comparative study "*Protecting women and girls from violence in the digital age – The relevance of the Istanbul Convention and the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime in addressing online and technology-facilitated violence against women*" which connects the Istanbul Convention and the Cybercrime Convention.

The Council of Europe is home not only to the Istanbul Convention, but also to the Cybercrime Convention (also known as the [Budapest Convention](#)). It sets standards in relation to the more technical aspects of cybercrime, mutual legal cooperation across borders and much more. It is ratified by several countries outside the Council of Europe, including in Latin America and Africa.

The study explores the extent to which these two international treaties can complement each other in dynamic ways and help address online and technology-facilitated violence against women through co-ordinated policies, prevention, protection, prosecution and international co-operation. Indeed, as the most far-reaching legally binding human rights treaty covering all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, the Istanbul Convention can be particularly relevant to address online and technology-facilitated violence against women, while the Budapest Convention is the most relevant international legally binding treaty on cybercrime and electronic evidence and hence provides the potential to prosecute such violence against women.

From online sexual harassment (such as cyber flashing, sexualized defamation and slander, impersonation for sexual purposes and doxing and flaming), to image-based sexual harassment such as creepshots (sexually suggestive or private pictures taken without consent and shared online), the new study categorises and defines different forms of online and technology-facilitated violence against women and develops explicit references to Articles 33, 34 and 40 of the Istanbul Convention, supplemented by relevant provisions from the Budapest Convention. It analyses the Istanbul Convention's provisions on integrated policies, prevention, protection and prosecution and provides commentary on their application with regard to the various aspects of the phenomenon of online and technology-facilitated violence against women.

Originally published in [English](#) and [French](#), it is now available also in [Spanish](#) thanks to a voluntary contribution made by the Japanese Government to the Council of Europe. Participants at the meeting, in particular those representing MESECVI, welcomed the availability also in Spanish, which was considered to be useful in garnering support for the approach of linking the field of women's rights with that of preventing and combating violence against women also in Spanish-speaking countries.

In the ensuing discussion, and with a view to the priority theme of addressing the digital dimension of violence as chosen by the Platform President Iris Luarasi (GREVIO), participants discussed her proposal to develop a common paper/thematic document on this issue. This proposal was met with preliminary approval and considered as an opportunity to offer insights into the work and mandates of all Platform

members in a consolidated manner. Another proposal made was that of creating an interactive webpage with thematic sections compiling the different mechanism's instruments and reports on online and technology-facilitated violence.

#### **8. Thematic discussion on the use of the so-called Parental Alienation Syndrome and related concepts around the globe**

The Platform President Iris Luarasi informed the Platform members that GREVIO's upcoming 3rd activity report will devote its thematic focus section to the issue of domestic violence and custody, putting the spotlight on this and related concepts, among other things. Despite the obligation set out in Article 31 of the Istanbul Convention to ensure that incidents of violence, including abuse of the other parent, are taken into account when deciding on visitation and custody, GREVIO's baseline evaluation reports have shown that shortcomings exist in ensuring this. Instead, GREVIO found the use of the notion of so-called "parental alienation" or related concepts as a way of minimizing the risk of domestic violence in family court processes.

The Secretary of MESECVI mentioned that MESECVI adopted a provision which explicitly prohibits the use of "evidence based on the discrediting testimony on the basis of alleged Parental Alienation Syndrome" in the Declaration on Violence against Women, Girls and Adolescents and their Sexual and Reproductive Rights (MESECVI/CEVI/DEC.4/14). She further added that parental alienation is still widely used, although it is not scientifically proven.

Recalling the joint statement on this issue published by the Platform in 2019, the members present emphasized the need to follow developments in this field closely and share concerns over the continued use of such notions around the globe.

#### **9. Date for the next meeting**

The next meeting of the EDVAW Platform was tentatively scheduled to be held, as an in-person meeting, on the margins of the Human Rights Council from 13 June to 8 July in Geneva, Switzerland. An exact date will be communicated at a later stage.

#### **10. Other business**

The Platform members held a brief discussion about ways in which to exchange with relevant bodies from regions currently not represented on the Platform, notably the Asian Pacific region and the Middle East. The possibility of exchanging with entities such as the ASEAN Commission of Women and Children or others without full membership was raised.