



## 13th Meeting of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW Platform)

17 June 2022 in Geneva (Switzerland)

13:00 – 17:15 (CET)

<b>Participants / Experts</b>	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>
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)
Meskerem Geset Techane	UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (WGDAW)
Marion Bethel	Working Group on Violence against Women of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Reem Alsalam	UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences (SRVAW)
Janet R. Sallah Njie	Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa (SR RWA)

### Supporting Staff

Name	Organisation
Alejandra Negrete	MESECVI
Aminata Manga	ACHPR
Anita Bagona	ACHPR
Bernadette Arditi	OHCHR/WGDAW
Federica Donati	OHCHR
Johanna Nelles	GREVIO
Louise Morlon	GREVIO
Orlagh McCann	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 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EDVAW Platform meeting
  - *Presentation of the thematic section on documents and tools on the digital dimension of violence against women – EDVAW Platform and GREVIO*
  - *Tour de table*
4. Exchange of views with the Permanent Missions of Switzerland and the Netherlands, as members of the Gender Network
5. Thematic debate n°1: Digital dimension of violence against women – Connecting the women’s rights field with the cybercrime field
6. Exchange of views with Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum, Representative of Indonesia to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) on its mid-term review of the Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women (2016-2025)
7. Thematic debate n°2: The parental alienation syndrome in the context of pushbacks on women’s rights – possible joint action points
8. Thematic debate n°3: A global women’s rights treaty on violence against women
9. Dates for the next meeting
10. Other business
  - *Discussion on possible angle for joint statement for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November)*

## *Meeting summary*

### **3. Updates since the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EDVAW Platform meeting**

- ✓ Presentation of the thematic section on documents and tools on the digital dimension of violence against women – [EDVAW Platform and GREVIO](#)
- ✓ The Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa announced the ongoing work on a joint general comment on the welfare of the child with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), to which the members of the Platform are invited to provide input. She also mentioned that the African Union is developing its own treaty on violence against women, in which there would be an adaptation of the Istanbul Convention relevant to the African continent.
- ✓ The Secretariat of MESECVI reported on the recent work of the Committee on the issue of digital violence against women. In April 2022, a new report on cyberviolence and cyberbullying against women and girls<sup>1</sup> was published under the Spotlight Initiative, with the support of UN WOMEN. MESECVI also launched a free [online course](#) on digital security in the Latin America and Caribbean region with a gender perspective, aiming to contribute to a better understanding of the disproportionate impact of cyber threats on women and girls and provide tools for digital self-care. The course is only available in Spanish but will be translated in English next year. The Committee is currently working on two other projects, notably a draft declaration on cyberviolence against women as a “symbolic violence” and a model law on cyberviolence.

### **4. Exchange of views with the Permanent Missions of the Netherlands and Switzerland**

Members of the Permanent Missions of the Netherlands and Switzerland presented the work of the Gender Network, present in Geneva. This network of Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva meets twice a year, and exclusively in preparation of the sessions of the Human Rights Council (HRC), to discuss gender issues. It provides a forum for members to share experiences and disseminate good practices, but also to develop common positions on draft HRC resolutions.

The representatives showed a strong interest in engaging with the Platform, in particular in relation to topical issues such as digital violence against women. The Swiss representative saw an opportunity for the Platform to be a leader on these issues of digital violence and would be interested in supporting the Platform's work. As a new member of the UN Security Council, Switzerland would also be interested in supporting and pushing the issue of women's participation in peace processes and the prevention of sexual violence in armed conflicts, by bringing human rights mechanism's contributions forward in the work of the Security Council.

Platform members agreed that joint work would be relevant, particularly on issues of sexual violence in armed conflict.

### **5. Thematic debate n°1: Digital dimension of violence against women – Connecting the women's rights field with the cybercrime field**

As presented during the last Platform meeting, GREVIO has been working on connecting the women's rights field and the cybercrime field, notably with the 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”<sup>2</sup>. This study is available in English, French and Spanish thanks to the contribution of the government of Japan.

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<sup>1</sup> Available only in Spanish at: <https://www.oas.org/es/mesecvi/docs/MESECVI-Ciberviolencia-ES.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/the-relevance-of-the-ic-and-the-budapest-convention-on-cybercrime-in-a/1680a5eba3>

In line with the priorities set out for the presidency of GREVIO, the President of the Platform presented a statement in which the Platform calls on state representatives, intergovernmental organisations and civil society to double up efforts to ensure recognition of the digital dimension of violence against women and discrimination in human rights implementation efforts, technical co-operation, national strategies, programmes and action plans. This statement was proposed for adoption to mark the occasion of the Platform's 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The Platform members also agreed on working on a first-ever thematic paper in which the Platform would trace the developments at the level of the respective mechanisms in addressing this topic as well as the existing legal standards – global and regional – that can be used to respond to such violence, including those emanating from the cybercrime field. This could be enriched by findings from country-specific work as well as any thematic points that have emerged from the CSW side event this year that focused on this topic. The paper could end on some concrete action points to guide states in their endeavors to address this. A draft text will be presented at the next meeting.

## **6. Exchange of views with Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum, Representative of Indonesia to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW)**

As agreed at the previous meeting, Platform members held an exchange of views with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, a region currently not represented on the Platform. It was also an opportunity to interact with the Japanese Consulate in Strasbourg, which, through a voluntary contribution, made this in-person meeting in Geneva possible.

A representant of Indonesia to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum, participated virtually to present the work of the AICHR and the ASEAN Committee on Women more specifically, and to discuss future co-operation.

Preventing and combating discrimination against women is one of the ASEAN priorities, as stated in Article 4 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration<sup>3</sup>. The AICHR has been active in promoting the rights of women and children among ASEAN member states and facilitating the realization of gender equality and women's human rights in the region.

The AICHR has notably included initiatives to prevent and combat violence against women in their five-year plan for 2021-2025. It is currently working on five main priorities: strengthening national referral systems and developing the network of referral systems to respond cross-border issues (human trafficking, migrant workers, violence against women); introducing a victim-oriented and gendered approach to countering violent extremism; introducing a gender perspective in investigative interviews for police officers and community policing; addressing the impact of climate change on women and children; and finally, women, peace and security. It has also generated regional discussions in relation to efforts to combat discrimination against women in ASEAN through number of workshops and research.

Platform members discussed potential co-operation with this region, particularly on the issues of the impact of climate change on women's rights. In particular, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences announced that her next report, presented in October, will be dedicated to these issues.

## **7. Thematic debate n°2: The parental alienation syndrome in the context of pushbacks on women's rights**

This agenda item allowed Platform members to update colleagues on developments since the last meeting on this issue of “parental alienation syndrome in the context of pushbacks on women's rights”.

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<sup>3</sup> “The rights of women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and vulnerable and marginalised groups are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences informed the Platform that she will present a report on this issue at the next Human Rights Council in 2023. She expressed concern at the increasing number of cases in several countries (Spain, Brazil, Italy, the United Kingdom, Australia, Sweden, Germany and Austria). In February 2022, a joint statement was signed by various UN Special Rapporteurs (notably the Special Rapporteur on Torture) to condemn Spain for not protecting the rights of girls and boys in the justice system.

The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women also called to involve other entities, such as the Council of Europe Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (also known as the Lanzarote Convention), to work on this topic.

The President of the Platform presented the recent published activity report by GREVIO<sup>4</sup> which dedicated its thematic focus section on child custody, visitation and domestic violence, compiling findings drawn from GREVIO's evaluations thus far. The report describes strengths and weaknesses overall in ensuring that in decisions on custody and visitation after domestic violence women and children are not done further harm by the abuser. In its assessment of national legislation and practice, GREVIO looked into the details as to how visitation and custody rights are decided on, and to what extent the so-called concept of parental alienation plays a role. In several of its reports it has shown that this concept is being used to minimise evidence of domestic violence in civil proceedings. It also undermined views of child victims of domestic violence who fear contact with domestic abuse perpetrators, despite obvious risks for both adult and child victims.

The Secretary of MESECVI informed the members that a statement on this issue is being drafted and will be shared to the Platform members.

## **8. Thematic debate n°3: A global women's rights treaty on violence against women**

The Platform members noted a call for a new global legal framework to address violence against women. In October 2021, the first Draft Global Treaty to End Violence Against Women and Girls was created in consultation with women's rights experts. In their discussions, the Platform members agreed to give priority to the implementation of existing international and regional standards on violence against women instead of embarking on a process of developing new standards at the global level. In the current context of continued risk of regression on women's rights, the members expressed their concern regarding the possible risk of lowering standards and experiencing a setback. At the same time, they expressed their support for the further promotion of the Istanbul Convention as a legally binding treaty open to non-member states of the Council of Europe, emphasizing its comprehensive and far-reaching nature.

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

The next meeting of the EDVAW Platform was tentatively scheduled to be held online in October 2022. An exact date will be communicated at a later stage.

## **10. Other business**

The Platform members held a brief discussion on a possible topic for a joint statement for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November). The Secretariat of MESECVI suggested to center the statement on women's access to justice.

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<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/-/3rd-general-report-on-grevio-s-activities>