

**Conference: Women's Rights at the Crossroads:
Strengthening International Co-operation to
Close the Gap between Legal Frameworks and their Implementation**

**Organised by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the
office of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women,
its causes and consequences and under the auspices of the
French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers**

: CONCEPT NOTE
: Council of Europe
: Room G03
: Agora Building
: Strasbourg, France
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Violence against women remains one of the most pronounced expressions of the unequal power relations between women and men. It is both a violation of the human rights of women and a major obstacle to gender equality. International and regional treaties and law to end gender-based violence provide the foundations for women to enjoy their human rights and live a life free from violence. They include gender equality. International and regional treaties and law to end gender-based violence provide the foundations for women to enjoy their human rights and live a life free from violence. They include:

- the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation 19 on violence against women;
- the Inter-American Convention on the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women (Belém do Pará Convention);
- the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa;
- the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).

Their monitoring bodies – the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee), Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) – monitor implementation of these treaties by the States Parties. In addition, other independent UN human rights mechanisms, the special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council, particularly the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences, the Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and Practice (WGDAW) as well as the regional mechanisms such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) Rapporteur on women's rights, the MESECVI and the Special Rapporteur on Rights of Women of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) monitor the situation in relation to violence against women globally and regionally.

Co-operation, synergies and co-ordination are very important to ensure implementation at national level. This is underpinned by increased efforts on the part of the concerned monitoring bodies to stay abreast of each other's agenda, learn from each other's experience, achievements, and challenges, in the shared conviction that consistency is key to effectiveness and to addressing emerging issues. The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women has, since 2017, led the Platform of independent international and regional women's rights mechanisms. The Platform provides a framework for institutionalising the efforts undertaken towards accelerated co-ordination and synergies among these mechanisms. This event, hosted by the Council of Europe, will comprise of a closed meeting of the Platform which will be the fifth in the series¹, and an open thematic conference. More information about the Platform can be found at:

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

Scope and level of participation: an enlarged working event which will include representatives of monitoring mechanisms, representatives of governments (members of the Gender Equality Commission, members of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention and its Bureau and representatives from national co-ordinating bodies on violence against women), representatives of other Council of Europe specialised intergovernmental committees, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, media representatives, experts, civil society, other regional and/or international organisations.

¹ The first meeting took place in New York at the CSW61; the second meeting took place in Washington DC at the OAS in December 2017; the third meeting took place in New York at the CSW62; the fourth meeting took place in the context of the 169th session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Boulder, Colorado in October 2018; the fifth meeting took place in New York during the CSW63