



Strasbourg 6 April 2020

GEC (2020) Bureau 1

GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION
Bureau meeting
Friday, 3 April 2020

Report

1. Information from the Secretariat and the Bureau members

The Chair, Charles Ramsden (United Kingdom) opened the meeting and welcomed the two other members of the Bureau, Andreia Lourenço Marques (Portugal) and Ljiljana Loncar (Serbia), as well as the Secretariat.

Daniele Cangemi informed the members about the working procedures in place in the Council of Europe during the current COVID-19 situation. He also informed the members that the Committee of Ministers Rapporteur Group on Human Rights (GR-H) was going ahead on 7 April 2020 and decisions would be taken through a written procedure. The agenda includes the 2019 GEC annual report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy and the GEC16 meeting report.

The Chair expressed some doubt about the next GEC meeting taking place on 27-28-29 May 2020. The Bureau decided to wait until 15 April 2020 before making a decision about the dates of the next meeting, when there may be more clarity about the future working and travel conditions in Europe. The Secretariat will look at possible alternative dates if necessary.

- *The Bureau agreed to review the dates of the next GEC meeting in light of the current COVID-19 situation and to decide on 15 April 2020 whether to keep the dates fixed or postpone the meeting.*

2. Bureau working procedures ([Resolution on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods](#) and [terms of reference of GEC](#))

The Chair invited the Secretariat to inform the members about the working procedures in other committees and how to best make use of the Bureau. Daniele Cangemi said that the main aim of a bureau is to prepare for the plenary sessions of a committee and to steer its work. There is a wide variety of bureau compositions; some have up to seven members while others, such as the GEC, have only three members. The Bureau can be useful for those committees that only meet once a year, and to take decisions on issues which cannot wait until the plenary session (for example, comments on a PACE Recommendation). The Chair said that he sometimes receives documents for review and that this could be continued within the Bureau.

The Bureau

- *agreed to adopt a light approach to its working methods;*
- *will review substantive working documents and review the draft agenda of the GEC meetings;*
- *agreed to meet on the first morning of the next GEC meeting and to review the situation then with regard to future meetings.*

3. Draft Work Plan 2020-2021

The Bureau reviewed the draft Work Plan 2020-2021 (GEC(2020)1) and agreed to revise it to include future activities as a result of the current COVID-19 crisis, as well as possible activities related to the Generation Equality Forum organised by UN-Women.

- *The Bureau will revise the draft Work Plan 2020-2021 for presentation to the GEC members at its next meeting.*

4. Thematic discussion proposals

The Bureau discussed the proposals for thematic discussions put forward by the GEC members and agreed that the proposals could be placed on the agenda of the next GEC in the following order of priority:

Thematic Discussions

1. COVID-19
2. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (Serbia)
3. Climate change from a gender equality perspective (Spain)

Presentations

1. Presentation by the producers of the code of women's rights (*Code de droits des femmes*), Fem&law association (Belgium)
2. Presentation of the project "ClickOff on CyberVAW" (Slovenia)
3. 30th anniversary of non-violent Velvet Revolution (Slovak Republic)

Information Items

1. Beijing +25 (France, Iceland);
 2. Consider how and whom to inform of the results of the debates during GEC meetings (Slovenia).
- *The Bureau decided on the priority of these items to be placed on the agenda of the next GEC meeting and agreed that the Secretariat could decide how many of the proposals to place on the agenda in view of the time available.*

5. Drafting Committee on migrant women (GEC-MIG)

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that this item has been placed on the agenda of the next GEC meeting in order to get guidance from all the members before the GEC-MIG meets. It is planned to have an open discussion about expectations of the drafting committee, and the priorities to be

given in its discussions about the draft recommendation. The Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees will be invited to an exchange of views with the GEC. It was also pointed out that based on previous GEC discussions, a factsheet on migrant women and children had been prepared which could be used as a basis for further debate. It was proposed to follow the working procedures used by the Drafting Committee which prepared the sexism recommendation. The Chair pointed out that the key difference between the two committees is that an old [Council of Europe recommendation concerning women migrants](#) exists and this can also be used as a basis to build upon. He asked that this recommendation be made available to the GEC members for their discussion. The Bureau agreed that the issue was very sensitive in many member states and it was important to have experts on the subject participate in the drafting of the recommendation. The Chair, while noting the importance of having experts on the committee, said that it was also important to keep a strong link with the GEC.

- *The Bureau agreed to hold a substantive discussion on the expectations and priorities of the GEC-MIG and looked forward to an exchange with the SRSG on migration and refugees at the next GEC meeting.*

6. COVID-19 – impact of crisis on women and on gender equality – GEC work

The Chair thanked the Vice-President, Andreia Lourenço Marques, for her initiative in asking member states about measures being taken in the member states to protect women victims of violence during the current COVID-19 crisis. The Secretariat has prepared a compilation of all the responses, which also includes information received by colleagues in the Violence against Women Division, action taken by the Council of Europe and other international organisations, as well as by civil society. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that it was looking at ways in which to make the information public through the creation of a webpage and also to widen the extent of information from the member states to include areas such as, for example, sexual health and reproductive rights, impact on women's employment/job losses, women's role in unpaid care and domestic work, etc. The Secretariat proposed sending a new "formal" request to the GEC, as well as to the members of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention asking for more information as well as authorisation to publish information already received.

The Bureau

- *instructed the Secretariat to ask the GEC members for authorisation to publish the information already provided regarding COVID-19 and measures taken in the member states, and to give them the opportunity to add or amend the text provided;*
- *agreed to an official request to be sent to the GEC members and the Committee of the Parties of the Istanbul Convention for more information on different aspects of the COVID-19 crisis and gender equality and women's rights.*

7. 17th meeting of the Gender Equality Commission

The Bureau agreed to the GEC draft agenda taking into account the points discussed during its meeting.

- *The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to revise the GEC draft agenda to take into account its discussions and the decision to review the dates of the next meeting on 15 April 2020.*

8. Dates of forthcoming meetings

The Secretariat informed the members that the Greek authorities have invited the GEC to hold its 18th meeting in Athens, Greece, in October in the framework of the Greek Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. They are proposing to hold a half-day thematic debate/round table (14 October) on the subject of national/institutional mechanisms on gender equality, their potential and their future role; the challenges that the current COVID crisis has for their functioning; and also the management of the social consequences of COVID-19 on the structures for combating gender-based violence. This would be followed by a two-day GEC meeting (15-16 October). The Chair thanked the Greek authorities for their invitation and looked forward to holding the meeting in Athens.

- *The Bureau thanked the Greek authorities for the invitation to hold the 18th GEC meeting in Athens in October and approved the plans as presented by the Secretariat.*

9. Appointment of a GEC representative to the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), as well as its subordinate body, the Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS)

The Bureau was asked to approve the appointment of a GEC representative to participate in the meetings of the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), as well as its subordinate body, the Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS) as these meetings may take place before the next GEC meeting. The Bureau agreed to appoint Alexandra Adriaenssens (Belgium) as the GEC representative for the two committees. The Bureau also agreed that priority should be given to Alexandra's participation in the ADI/MSI-DIS meetings, with the Secretariat regularly participating in the meetings of the CDADI, unless there were particular circumstances that required Alexandra's presence at both.

- *The Bureau agreed that Alexandra Adriaenssens (Belgium) would represent the GEC at the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), as well as its subordinate body, the Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS).*

10. Date of the next meeting of the Bureau

The Bureau agreed exceptionally to delay the start of the first day of the next plenary meeting until 10:00 am in order to allow for them to hold a Bureau meeting.

Participants

Bureau of the Gender Equality Commission

Charles Ramsden (Chair), Andreia Lourenco Marques (Vice-Chair), Ljiljana Loncar (Vice-Chair).

Secretariat

Daniele Cangemi, Cécile Gréboval, Adrienne Looby, Evrydiki Tseliou.

Bureau meeting

Via video-link

Friday, 3 April 2020

Points for discussion

1. **Information from the Secretariat and the Bureau members**
2. **Bureau working procedures** ([Resolution on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods](#) and [terms of reference of GEC](#))
3. **Draft Work Plan 2020-2021**
4. **Thematic discussion proposals**
5. **Drafting Committee on migrant women (GEC-MIG)**
6. **COVID-19 – impact of crisis on women and on gender equality – GEC work**
7. **17th meeting of the Gender Equality Commission**
8. **Dates of forthcoming meetings**
9. **Appointment of a GEC representative to the Steering Committee on anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), as well as its subordinate body, the Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS) (terms of references attached)**
10. **Any other business**
11. **Date of the next meeting of the Bureau**