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**GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION
(GEC)**

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

**An event bringing together the International and
Regional Mechanisms to combat Violence against Women**

**23-24 May 2019
Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France**

Background and draft programme

BACKGROUND

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:

- the 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 (Convention of Belém do Pará);
- 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 - Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the follow-up mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) and Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) - monitor implementation of these treaties by the States Parties. In addition, other independent UN 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 event, hosted by the Council of Europe, will be the fifth in a series of events to strengthen synergies between the international frameworks on violence against women.¹

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 European Court of Human Rights, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the media sector and 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.

DRAFT PROGRAMME**First Day – 23 May 2018**

(half day closed event limited to the regional mechanisms)

2:30 – 5:30 pm Meeting of the International and Regional Mechanisms to combat Violence against Women

Participants: Chairpersons and Bureau members of the CEDAW Committee, the members of the CEDAW working group on updating General Recommendation No. 19, members of GREVIO, representatives of MESECVI, representatives of the - African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights ACHPR and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences, members of the Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and Practice, representatives of the European Court of Human Rights and of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Objective: to allow meeting time and space for representatives of the monitoring bodies from all regions of the world to present their respective work to each other, to discuss possible synergies and emerging issues and evolving interpretations of the respective legal standards on VAW to identify common trends in government responses to violence against women and to join forces in addressing any backsliding on international commitments and standards in the area of violence against women.

Scope and level: A meeting of technical experts serving on international or regional mechanisms to combat violence against women who have an interest in sharing experiences and learning from each other to allow for a real exchange between like-minded monitoring bodies.

Second day – 24 May 2018

9:30 – 10:30 am

Opening Session

- Council of Europe (SG or DSG)
- French authorities (Presidency of the Committee of Ministers)
- UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences
- President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) (host mechanism)

10:30 – 11:00 am

Coffee break and networking

11:00 – 12:30 pm

Strengthening international co-operation between United Nations and regional independent mechanisms on violence against women and women's human rights to close the gap between legal frameworks and their implementation including feedback from the meeting of international and regional mechanisms to combat violence against women

Moderator:

Chair of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention (tbd)

- Presentation of the Platform of regional independent mechanisms on violence against women and women's human rights - **UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences**

Discussion with representatives of:

- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)
- Follow-up mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI)
- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)
- Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and Practice
- Rapporteur on women's rights Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

Discussion and questions

12:30 – 2:00 pm

Lunch

Afternoon Session – Thematic Panels

2:00 – 3:30 pm **Putting victims' safety first: Child custody and domestic violence in national and international jurisprudence**

Moderator: (tbd)

- **Keynote speaker:** Professor Ruth Halperin-Kaddari (tbc)

Panel discussion with representatives of:

- Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Rapporteur on women's rights/Inter-American Court of Human Rights
- Committee on the Rights of the Child
- European Court of Human Rights

Discussion and questions

3:30 – 3:45 pm *Coffee break and networking*

3:45 – 5:15 pm **Ending violence against women and girls: a condition and accelerator towards the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda**

Moderator:

Chair of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission (tbd)

- **Keynote speaker:**

Panel discussion² with representatives of:

- UN Women
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- Gender Equality Commission

5:15 – 5:30 pm **Concluding remarks by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences**

² Max five panellists & moderator. One or two specific questions by the moderator to be addressed by panellists