



Concept Note for ICW Side Event at CSW 64 New York, co-sponsored by the Korean Mission

Monday, 16th March at 11:30am -12.45pm, Room CR 11 in the UN building

"Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Best Practices for Women's Empowerment".

Background:

Freedom from violence is a fundamental human right, yet millions of women and girls still experience domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, child, early and forced marriage, sex trafficking, 'honour' crimes, female genital mutilation and other forms of economic and social violence. These endemic practices are rooted in gender inequality and affect women from childhood to old age. In most countries, less than 10 percent of women who experience violence seek help from the police, resulting in the impunity of perpetrators and few convictions.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) and gender-based violence (GBV) prevent women and girls from reaching their full potential and are barriers to the achievement of gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, the World Bank states that VAWG has significant social and economic costs, which can amount to 3.7% of GDP.

Today, 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA), 149 countries have ratified CEDAW, 144 have laws against domestic violence and 52 against marital rape, yet VAWG remains one of our greatest challenges. One reason for this intractability is the continued disempowerment of women in the political, economic and civic spheres.

According to a Harvard Kennedy School study on political empowerment, women are more likely to engage in civic discussion and report crimes against them in countries where there are more female political leaders; however, in 2018, only 17% of ministers and 24% of parliamentarians globally were women (World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index). When women are able to participate in government, own assets, have access to financial resources, and engage in the decision-making processes of their communities, they are better protected against violence. This can be supported through leadership and empowerment training and skills-based programs in areas of self-confidence, negotiation and assertiveness.

Women's political and civic participation and leadership can also help implement and enforce laws, policies and programs that address violence against women and promote gender equality, and such feminist leadership can ensure that governments allocate adequate resources and make the eradication of VAWG a priority. Increased political empowerment of women also leads to more opportunities for women to be included in peace negotiations and peace building processes, and thus can help create safer communities and ensure that every woman and girl will be free from GBV.

Panel Objectives:

This panel will bring together global experts to discuss the main advances made in addressing VAWG since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, including the role of women's empowerment in ending VAWG. Panellists will share best practices from around the world and offer guidance for the next steps in eliminating VAWG. The panel will:

1. Assess the progress made in eliminating VAWG since the BPFA in 1995 as well as highlight the remaining challenges and gaps post-Beijing +25.
2. Share examples of best practices of policy action and prevention strategies from around the world in preventing and addressing VAWG.
3. Synthesize lessons from the Beijing + 25 review and the first five years of the SDGs, with a view towards the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
4. Outline best practices to promote the political empowerment of women to help end VAWG and identify what more should be done.
5. Present civil society's recommendations for eliminating VAWG produced during the recent Beijing + 25 Reviews around the world.

Distinguished Panel

H. E. Chull-joo Park, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the UN.

Dr Jungsook Kim, President, International Council of Women (ICW-CIF).

Dr Dubravka Simonovic, UN Special Rapporteur on VAW, OHCHR – Keynote Speaker

Ms. Hilary Gbedemah, Chair of UN CEDAW Committee.

Ms. Hyeshin Park, Economist and Gender Programme Co-ordinator with the Networks, Partnerships and Gender Division at the OECD Development Centre.

Dr Mohinder Watson, VAWG Lead for Civil Society Working Group for CSO Forum and UNECE Beijing + 25 Review, Geneva, and Main ICW UN Representative, Geneva.

Panel Moderator: Charles Ramsden, Chair of the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Commission.

A report of the panel's deliberations will be produced and sent to UN Women as input for the global efforts to advance the Beijing +25 and the SDGs agenda