



11 March 2019, New York - Statement on behalf of the European Union delivered by H.E. Mr Marius-Constantin Budăi, Minister of Labour and Social Justice of Romania, at the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Madam Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries North Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Serbia\* and Albania\*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

First, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to Ethiopia and all nations affected by the crash of an Ethiopian Airlines plane yesterday.

This meeting is taking place at a crucial time when we are evaluating the progress made to date since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. That was a fundamental step forward and a turning point in the global commitment that we have jointly embraced since.

This evaluation takes also into account the results obtained during the first five years of gender-transformative implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda is one of the most comprehensive blueprints for realizing gender equality at all levels.

There is evidence that the lives of women and girls have improved in some aspects, and we can be proud to be part of that process.

Over the last two decades with a world population at 7.5 billion, social protection has proven its worth in addressing global challenges and ensuring that no one is left behind. It has continued to expand across partner countries.

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\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.



However forty years since the adoption of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and a quarter century after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action, many threats, hurdles and challenges persist. 4 billion people, the majority of whom are women and girls, remain unprotected. The draft CSW Agreed Conclusions provide a sobering reminder of the many issues that require concerted action if we are to create a world where no woman or girl is left behind: from structural barriers and poverty, to all forms of violence and harmful shortcomings in access to social and public services.

The EU strongly welcomes the priority theme of this year's discussion. Social protection systems, social services and sustainable infrastructure play a critical role in empowering all women and girls. We have today an unprecedented occasion to forge a gender-transformative social model, which may deliver concrete help to women and girls to reach their full potential.

The EU remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The EU further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services.

Empowering all women and girls requires focussing on education, work and social protection: education is the necessary path to build out skills and knowledge, including ICT-related ones, that allow girls and women to actively participate in the labour market and progress personally and professionally; decent and paid work is the most suitable way to help women to participate and gain economic independence while social protection preserves them from risks which can happen throughout their life and will allow them to ensure that they



have access to and control over resources and care when they are not able to work. In this vein, the European Union has long supported an inclusive, rights-based approach to sustainable, coordinated, comprehensive, quality and universal social protection.

The EU's new initiatives are increasingly informed by gender analyses, and collection of sex- disaggregated data, and age-, when relevant, is now mandatory to identify gaps in gender equality, and effectively measure the impact on gender equality of all EU funded actions. Applying a gender lens to all aspects of social protection schemes and programmes, and systematically linking them to complementary public services and infrastructures will ensure the development of gender-sensitive social protection systems. It will not only benefit girls and women, but whole communities.

Women's voices still go often unheard, as they are underrepresented in decision-making positions and processes in all spheres of professional and public life. It is an issue we pay particular attention to in this year of European elections. We need to ensure that women and girls can take their role, equally as men, in all aspects of life.

Power also impacts on other aspects such as violence. Indeed, women and girls continue to be the majority of victims of all forms of violence, in particular sexual and gender-based and domestic violence. Violence against women and girls, in addition to being a violation of their human rights, causes enormous economic and social loss to society.

Together with the United Nations, the European Union launched two years ago "the Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls", through targeted, large-scale actions in all regions of the world.

Madame Chair,

The EU will continue to work to ensure the promotion, protection and fulfillment of all human rights of all women and girls. Particular attention is needed for those who potentially face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on any ground including sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity.



We stand behind those defending the human rights of women and girls, the grassroots activists, the women's movements, the non-governmental organisations, the human rights defenders. The EU believes that an empowered, strong, vibrant, pluralistic, vocal and free civil society is a condition of any democratic system. We will therefore continue to strengthen our engagement with civil society also ensuring the continuous support to their actions worldwide.

Madam Chair,

We stand firm behind the principles and the platform of action agreed in Beijing: we believe that we need to strongly re-affirm our commitment to this and adapt this to address new challenges. It is important to make younger generations shareholders of our Beijing commitments.

Thank you.