

HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
22 September to 3 October 2014
Warsaw, Poland

Rapporteur's report
Friday, 26 September 2014

Working session 9 (specifically selected topic):
Violence against women and children (continued)

Rapporteur: Ms. Stephanie Winkler, Permanent Mission of Austria to the OSCE

No. of statements:

Delegations: 6

Civil Society: 5

OSCE Inst./Int'l Org: 0

Rights of Reply: 5

Working session 9 focused on prevention of violence against women and children belonging to vulnerable groups.

Ms. Beatriz Balbin, First Deputy Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic institutions and Human rights (ODIHR) introduced the topics of the session reiterating that women and children from vulnerable groups face multiple forms of discrimination, which can lead to violence against them. She noted that this was recognized in Ministerial Council Decision 4/13 on enhancing OSCE efforts to implement the Action Plan on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area, with a particular focus on Roma and Sinti women, youth and children.

The first Introducer, *Ms. Soraya Post, Member of the European Parliament for Sweden*, noted that violence against women and children is a symptom of an unequal society. There is therefore a need to address root causes and underlying structures, such as the lack of access to education, and social welfare, the unaffordability of housing as well as unemployment rates, which are particularly high among women of vulnerable groups. Participating States should address all forms of discrimination. Additionally, she called for the provision of improved legal services and funding for women's organizations and shelters.

The second Introducer, *Dr. Jemma Hasratyan, President of the Association of Women with University Education, Director of the Gender Studies Center*, highlighted that much of the violence against women and children of vulnerable groups is invisible because of the difficulties victims face in reporting such crimes or accessing victims' services. A firm legislative basis is required to tackle this issue as well as improved data collection. Perpetrators must be brought to justice and victims must be protected. Targeted and strategic approaches are needed to combat multiple forms of discrimination.

In the following debate it was widely stated that women and children still face discrimination and violence in the OSCE area. 11 interventions were carried out of which 5 were made by

non-governmental organizations. In addition, 5 participating States made use of their right to reply in response to prior interventions.

Several participants highlighted that women and children from groups such as Roma and Sinti and migrant communities, women and children with disabilities as well as women and children in conflict situations are susceptible to multiple forms of discrimination which make them particularly vulnerable to violence and less able to access support services. It is the responsibility of participating States' authorities to be aware of these barriers to access and to work actively to lower and remove them. This requires adequate funding, awareness raising and training of public servants and can be most effectively carried out in close coordination with relevant civil society organisations.

A number of participants shared their best practices in combating violence against women and children. Several referred to the importance of ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention in this respect. One NGO highlighted the need to protect women detainees as they were a group particularly vulnerable to violence and harassment. One delegation expressed concern about the abuse, sale and trafficking of children after adoption.

Many speakers stressed that effective implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, would make a significant contribution to addressing the issue of violence against women and children in conflict and post- conflict situations.

Furthermore, several speakers call attention to the importance of combating practices that harm women and girls including forced marriage and honour killings.

Recommendations to the participating States:

- Condemn violence and address all forms of discrimination against women and children, especially those belonging to vulnerable groups;
- Support and provide funding to hotlines and shelters, as well as eliminating obstacles in the access to services;
- Adopt specific laws against domestic violence and establish adequate networks for victim assistance as well as rehabilitation measures;
- Establish a comprehensive disaggregated data collection system to ensure the adequate registration of the situation women and children from vulnerable groups face;
- Effectively protect children from all forms of violence and abuse, i.e. through adequate legislation and prevention programmes;
- Co-operate in combating sexual violence in conflict, taking into account United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security;
- Step up national and regional efforts to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls and in this context ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- Co-operate with women's associations to better address remaining challenges regarding violence against women belonging to vulnerable groups.

Recommendations to OSCE institutions, executive structures and field operations:

- Develop policies and training to address discrimination in all forms;
- Continue to assist participating states in their efforts to address these issues.