

Statement by Finland

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2014, working session 8

Mister Moderator,

In addition to the EU statement delivered earlier by Estonia I would like to add a few words on the national measures by Finland to combat violence against women.

Speakers have already highlighted the importance of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention. Finland sees the Convention as a crucial instrument in strengthening the efforts to combat all forms of violence against women.

Finland was among the very first signatories of the Istanbul Convention, and is strongly committed to its ratification. In this respect, I am pleased to inform you that last week, on September 18th, the Government of Finland submitted the bill on the ratification of the Convention to the Parliament. Let me also add that the ratification has been prepared by a broad-based working group that was chaired by the MFA and included representation from other ministries and government authorities, the police, academia and civil society.

While human rights and in particular women's rights hold a central place in our political decision-making processes, the issue of violence against women and girls is unfortunately something very familiar to Finland. This was also revealed by the EU wide survey conducted by the European Fundamental Rights Agency.

International and national experience shows that combating violence against women successfully calls for a comprehensive approach. Only by improving co-operation among the authorities, service providers, professionals and NGOs will we be able to reach results: effective prevention, protection, support and empowerment for the victims of violence, and punishment of the perpetrators. Therefore, the Finnish Government has a multi-sectoral five-year Action Plan to combat violence against women.

To prevent violence against women and girls, we need to start by engaging men and boys. Violence against women and girls is linked to masculine culture and its gender stereotypes and attitudes towards women. One way of working for the non-violent male culture in Finland has been the Boys' House work. This is a gender specified environment offering low-threshold support services for boys aged 10-28. The Boys' House offers individual and group support and networking for boys. They try to provide new ways of looking at masculinity, new roles for boys. The Boys' House is sending a

message that boys have the right to expand the way to be a man and a boy in a non-violent manner.

In our efforts to combat violence against women we need to pay special attention to women and girls vulnerable to multiple discrimination, such as indigenous women, women with disabilities as well as LGBTI persons. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland published last year the results of the first-ever Finnish study on domestic violence experienced by Roma women. This study was conducted at the request of and in cooperation with the Roma community. According to the results, Roma women who face domestic violence have a higher threshold for seeking outside help.

This study will be discussed in more detail at a side event conveyed by the United States and Finland, today immediately after this afternoon's working session in the Meeting Room 1. The side event will discuss experiences and share best practices in combatting domestic violence against Roma women. I would like to warmly welcome all the participants to attend this side event.

Thank you, Mister moderator.