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Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

**Online Meeting of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on
Discrimination and Violence against Women
(EDVAW Platform)**

21 October 2020,

13:00 – 15:00 (CEST)

Owing to the COVID-19 outbreak and the measures adopted to contain it, the ninth meeting of the Platform of international and regional mechanisms on violence against women and women's rights took place online.

Participants

- Melissa Upreti (Vice Chair) and Ivana Radačić (member) of the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (WGDAW);
- Dubravka Simonovic, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (SRVAW);
- Marceline Naudi, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Council of Europe (GREVIO);
- Tatiana Rein Venegas, President of the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI);
- Margarette May Macaulay, Commissioner of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Rapporteur for Women's Rights (IACHR);
- ***and staff supporting them:*** Laura Morelo (IACHR); Federica Donati, Orlagh McCann, Renata Preturlan (SR VAW mandate); Eva Villarreal (MESECVI); Johanna Nelles (GREVIO); Hannah Wu (WGDAW); and Adwoa Kuofuor (OHCHR).

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Meeting summary:

1. WGDAW

- It was noted that the recent oral update provided by the WGDAW to the 3rd Committee of the General Assembly, and during the High Level Meeting to commemorate Beijing +25 in October 2020, represented an important step in strengthening the participation of the WGDAW, and also of other women's rights mechanisms in such deliberations. During its presentation to the GA the WGDAW called for a united approach within the UN system and highlighted the important role played by regional mechanisms in this regard.
- Reference was also made to the WG annual report to the Human Rights Council in June, which focused on women's rights within the changing world of work. The release of the report was accompanied by the launch of a micro site on the mandates webpage which aims to make the report easily readable and accessible, and there are plans to possibly expand the initiative to future reports. The next report of the WG will focus on sexual and reproductive health in situations of crisis and online consultations with relevant stakeholders to gather information have already been organized.
- A brief summary was proved on the WGDAW's position paper on gender equality and gender backlash¹. The WG is now considering how to promote it, possibly through a webinar, or through a Platform event on it. A longer paper has also been developed on the issue and it will be published in the Women's Studies International Forum.

2. GREVIO

- Over the last few months, GREVIO has been focusing its attention on monitoring activities, and despite the travel restrictions three evaluation visits were undertaken to Poland, San Marino and Slovenia. Some of the meetings with the authorities were held online from within the countries, while the large majority of all meetings and all exchanges with civil society were held in person.
- On 21 September GREVIO published its first baseline report on Belgium. The 22nd meeting of GREVIO was held online during the 2nd week of October, during which three of its final reports were adopted, on Andorra, Malta and Spain, and they are expected to be published around 25 November.

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/women/wgwomen/pages/wgwomenindex.aspx>

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- Preparations are underway to draft GREVIO's first General Recommendation, which will focus on the digital dimension of violence against women. A three member working group has been established to begin the process and work has commenced.

3. MESECVI

- MESECVI for the first time presented an amicus brief to the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. The case was that of Paola Guzman v. Ecuador² which involved a case of sexual violence against a school girl by a teacher. In its decision, the Court invited MESECVI to act as the main monitoring body tasked with ensuring that the recommendations to the Government are implemented. MESECVI also made a submission, in conjunction with Women's Link, to the CEDAW Committee, in relation to trafficking, and the need to ensure consular assistance in line with the Belem do Para Convention and the CEDAW, as corpus juris for the protection of women's rights.
- MESECVI is also focusing on the systematization of standards on violence against women in politics, in conjunction with UN Women. It is in the process of producing the hemispheric report to conclude the 3rd round of the follow up report.
- MESECVI also received support through the Spotlight initiative and will collaborate with UN Women on the project. Funding has already been received, and MESECVI is working to progress phase one which will finish in June 2021. The project is based on the femicide law, and includes focus on reparations, such as free legal counselling etc. The digital implications on violence against women during the Covid-19 pandemic is also an issue for consideration.
- In 2021 it will prepare its 4th round of evaluation, with particular focus on access to justice; child marriage; and violence against women with disabilities. It is also working on a Regional Study on Shelters for Victims of Gender-Based Violence in Latin America, with the support of EUROSOCIAL+.

4. IACHR

- The IACHR noted the need to incorporate a gender perspective and an intersectional approach when addressing the Covid-19 pandemic, taking into account the different contexts in which women are likely to be most vulnerable. For example, economic status, disability, racial background, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The Commission has also recommended that in cases of gender based violence, alternative

² Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Report No. 110/18, case 12,678, merits, Paola del Rosario Guzmán Albarracín and relatives.

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communication procedures should be adopted; availability of shelters for victims of domestic violence should be ensured. The Commission has also developed protocols on security agents and also distribution of guidance to all State authorities on how to deal with cases of domestic violence.

5. SRVAW

- The final report of the SR VAW to the Human Rights Council in June 2021 will focus on the criminalization of rape, and will also incorporate a model law on rape. An expert group meeting was held in preparation for the report and since then many submissions have been received from States and other stakeholders in response to the questionnaire that was issued. To date submissions received point to the fact that there are significant gaps in the implementation of existing standards.
- Due to the travel restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, two proposed country visits to Mongolia and Papua New Guinea are currently on hold.
- Following the last EDVAW Platform meeting in May, a questionnaire was issued requesting information from States, NHRIs and other relevant stakeholders on the impact of Covid-19 on violence against women. 274 submissions were received and formed the basis of the SR VAWs report to the GA in October on the intersection between the Covid-19 pandemic and the pandemic of violence against women. The report revealed that pre-existing gaps in addressing gender based violence against women have been exacerbated during the pandemic, and that going forward gaps in implementing international standards in terms of prevention, protection and prosecution need to be addressed.
- It was noted that the outcome document of the Beijing+25 regional review meeting organized by the UN Economic Commission for Europe in October 2019, includes a recommendation to States in the region to establish national bodies such as a femicide watch to prevent femicide or gender-related killings of women. The recommendation supports the SR VAW initiative in this regard, and many States have made progress in developing measures to either collect data on femicides, or to establish a femicide watch or observatory.

Preparation for the 65th session of the CSW (15 – 26 March 2021)

- It was noted that three UN mechanisms will be presenting at the CSW: the SR VAW, CEDAW and the WGDRAWG, and this is a positive step that should be built upon, to expand the participation of the expert mechanisms in future sessions. The idea of having regular Platform meetings within the margins of the CSW should be

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continued, and it is hoped that in the future all 7 mechanisms will be able to participate, supported by their respective secretariats.

- The three UN expert mechanisms were also invited to participate in an expert group meeting hosted by UN Women on the priority of the CSW: Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
- It was suggested that each mechanism could potentially hold individual panels on key thematic issues, and hold a joint panel on an area linked to the priority theme of the CSW.
- A possible joint statement from the Platform should also be developed in advance of the CSW.
- It was also noted that the Beijing +25 commemoration during the CSW would be a good opportunity to discuss the issue of pushbacks against women's rights, as it was during the Beijing Conference that gender became a key concept, and was accepted somehow, even though it wasn't defined, 25 years later however we are now witnessing the challenges. It was suggested that a possible event on the margins of the next CSW on the gender backlash would be useful.
- Reference was also made to the e-booklet on 25 years of the Beijing conference on women, and it was suggested that an alternative, and complementary e-booklet could be developed by the Platform, focusing on implementation strategies, and could be launched during the joint panel.
- It was noted that the link to the EDVAW Platform included by GREVIO on its webpage, is a positive step and should be replicated by the other mechanisms to give more visibility to the Platform (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/edvaw-platform>).

Action Points

- Prepare a **joint statement on behalf of the Platform to be issued during the CSW** – possibly linked to this years' thematic priority;
- **SR VAW to prepare a first draft** to be shared with the mechanisms for comments and input, all are invited to provide suggestions for the text in advance, should they wish to do so;
- Follow-up discussion by email to be initiated to discuss a possible **joint panel during the CSW on the backlash on women's rights**;
- SRVAW will propose format and methodology of a second booklet by the EDVAW Platform, focusing on implementation, and circulate it to the mechanisms.



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