

## **Platform for strengthening cooperation between international and regional independent mechanisms on violence and discrimination against women**

### **Introduction**

It has long been recognized that achievement of equality for women and the full enjoyment of their human rights is essential not only for women's empowerment but also for the advancement of society as a whole. This understanding is evident in the inclusion of gender equality in the Sustainable Development Goals, not only as the standalone Goal 5, but also as a cross-cutting principle necessary to the achievement of every other goal.

There is, however, an increasing and worrying backlash against women's human rights worldwide, which threatens to put an end to or even reverse the progress that has been accomplished towards advancing equality for women and girls. Concerted action by international organizations, UN entities and other human rights bodies worldwide will be necessary to combat this backlash and to continue moving the world towards full gender equality, fully enjoyment of the human rights of women and girls, and the elimination of gender-based violence.

Independent human rights mechanisms on violence against women and women's rights operating at the international and regional levels play a decisive role in monitoring implementation of the human rights standards necessary to tackle violence and discrimination against women globally.

Their recommendations provide an overview of the most important and urgent women's human rights issues in any given country, presenting an authoritative analysis of issues, gaps and shortcoming in implementation and government commitments that we need as an organization to guide Member States' efforts to ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all women and girls, throughout their life cycle and both in the public and private sphere.

Through strengthened cooperation at the global and regional level, independent mechanisms on women's rights can work towards harmonized strategies and undertake joint actions aimed at enhancing the protection and promotion of women's human rights and tackling violence against women worldwide, based on relevant international and regional instruments in this field.

This platform is an initiative launched by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences aimed at further enhancing cooperation between international and regional mechanisms on violence and discrimination against women and girls, as well as encouraging all international organizations, UN entities, governments, national institutions and stakeholders to take more advantage of the tools that the participating mechanisms make have at their disposal.

### **What is this initiative about?**

With the support of the Governments of Switzerland and the Republic of Korea, and the collaboration of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UN Women, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and

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consequences, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, has launched this initiative to develop an institutional platform for thematic collaboration between independent UN and regional mechanisms on violence and discrimination against women and establish deep links between them, in order to improve implementation of the existing international legal and policy framework on violence and discrimination against women and to reinforce each mechanism's recommendations relating to observed gaps in implementation.

The initiative was launched with a consultation among seven international and regional mechanisms in the auspices of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on 12 March 2018, followed by a High Level Panel on 13 March 2018, with the participation of Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

**Selected examples of collaboration between some International and Regional mechanisms on women's rights in 2017-18:**

[Joint statement](#) on the consideration of Sustainable Development Goal 5 by the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development  
OAS Panel with Regional and International Mechanisms for a comprehensive approach to addressing violence against women, 7 November 2017  
[Joint statement](#) on International Day on the Elimination of Violence against Women  
[Joint press release](#) expressing concern regarding incarceration of Teodora Vázquez and other women who suffered miscarriages in El Salvador.  
Expert Group Meeting regarding violence against women in politics and several side events on the occasion of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The initiative foresees a series of follow up consultations in the regions hosted by the different regional mechanisms, with the participation of civil society and other stakeholders, and aimed at discussing issues of common concern and thematic areas of priority. The initiative intends also to develop joint positions, enhanced information sharing and communications tools for the use of these mechanisms.

**What and who are these mechanisms?**

***The United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences***



Ms. Dubravka Šimonović was appointed as [United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences](#) in June 2015 by the UN Human Rights Council for an initial three years' tenure. She is mandated by the Human Rights Council to seek and receive information on violence against women, its causes and consequences and to respond effectively to such information, to recommend measures for the elimination of violence against women and to remedy its consequences, to work closely with other mechanisms, and to adopt a comprehensive and universal approach to the elimination violence against women, its causes and consequences.

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Ms. Šimonović was a member of the CEDAW Committee between 2002 and 2014, and served as its Chairperson in 2007 and 2008, its follow-up Rapporteur from 2009 to 2011 and as the Chairperson of the Optional Protocol Working Group in 2011. She has served in the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a diplomat with the rank of Ambassador, and in a number of positions at the Council of Europe including co-chairing negotiation of the Istanbul convention on violence against women. She held academic roles at several universities and is also the author of a number of books and articles on women's rights and violence against women.

Website: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/SRWomenIndex.aspx>

Email: [vaw@ohchr.org](mailto:vaw@ohchr.org)

***The United Nations Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice***



The [Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WGWomen/Pages/WGWomenIndex.aspx) is mandated by the Human Rights Council to identify, promote and exchange views on good practices related to the elimination of laws that discriminate against women, as well as to develop a dialogue with State and other actors regarding laws with a discriminatory impact on women, and to make recommendations regarding the improvement of legislation and implementation of law and practice in order to contribute to the promotion of gender

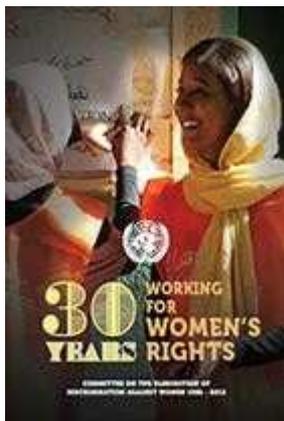
equality and empowerment of women.

The five members of the Working Group, all women's human rights experts, are Ms. Alda Facio (Costa Rica), Chair, Ms. Elizabeth Broderick (Australia), Ms. Ivana Radačić (Croatia), Ms. Meskerem Techane (Ethiopia), and Ms. Melissa Upreti (Nepal).

Website: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WGWomen/Pages/WGWomenIndex.aspx>

Email: [wgdiscriminationwomen@ohchr.org](mailto:wgdiscriminationwomen@ohchr.org)

***The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women***



The [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/CEDAW/Pages/CEDAWIndex.aspx) is the body of [independent experts](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/CEDAW/Pages/CEDAWIndex.aspx) that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by 189 States. The CEDAW Committee consists of 23 experts on women's rights from around the world.

Countries who have become party to the treaty are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights of the Convention are implemented. During its sessions the Committee considers each State party report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.

In accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention ratified by 109 States, the Committee is mandated to: (1) receive communications from individuals or groups of individuals submitting claims of violations of rights protected under the Convention to the Committee and (2) initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights. The Committee also formulates general recommendations and suggestions. General recommendations are directed to States and concern articles or themes in the

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Convention. The CEDAW has a built jurisprudence of 100 cases decided, and has conducted inquiries and adopted inquiry reports regarding Mexico, Canada, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

Website: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cedaw/pages/cedawindex.aspx>

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***The Inter-American Special Rapporteur on the rights of women***



The [Office of the Rapporteur on the Rights of Women](#) is one of eight thematic Rapporteurships of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). In accord with the basic principles of equality and non-discrimination underlying the instruments of the Inter-American human rights system, the Office of the Rapporteur on the Rights of Women focuses specifically on women's rights and gender equity and equality. One of the basic principles that informs its work and is reflected in everything it does is the need to incorporate a gender perspective in the planning and implementation of public policies and in decision-making in all Member States. The Office of the

Rapporteur raises awareness about the need to take new steps to ensure that women are able to exercise their basic rights; makes specific recommendations that encourage States to meet their priority obligations for equality and non-discrimination, including by conducting country visits to States; promotes mechanisms that the inter-American human rights system provides to protect women's rights, such as the lodging of individual complaints on violations; prepares specialized studies and reports in this area; and assists the Commission in responding to petitions and other reports of violations of these rights in the region.

The current Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, Ms. Margarette May Macaulay, was elected Commissioner on June 16, 2015, by the OAS General Assembly, for a four-year term that runs from January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2019. Ms. Macaulay holds a bachelor of laws degree from the University of London and is currently an attorney in private practice. She serves as Mediator in the Supreme Court of Jamaica and as Associate Arbitrator, as well as serving as Notary Public. She served as a Judge of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights from 2007 to 2012, contributing to the formulation of the Court's Rules of Procedure. She took part in the reform and drafting of laws in Jamaica and is well known as a strong proponent of and authority on women's rights. She is a citizen of Jamaica.

Website: <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/mandate/what.asp>

Email: [rcelorio@oas.org](mailto:rcelorio@oas.org)

***The Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa***



The [Special Rapporteur on Rights of Women in Africa](#) was established by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session which was held in Banjul, The Gambia, in April 1998, in recognition of the need to place particular emphasis on the problems and rights specific to women in Africa. It is therefore one of the oldest mechanisms of the Commission.

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The mandate was renewed four times with the adoption of Resolution 63 at the 34<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session, Resolution 78 at the 38<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session, Resolution 112 at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session and Resolution 154 at the 46<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session. The Special Rapporteur is mandated to assist African governments in the development and implementation of policies for the promotion and protection of women's rights, particularly in line with the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' rights, relative to the Rights of Women in Africa* ([the Maputo Protocol](#)), to undertake promotional and fact finding missions in African countries, to follow up on the implementation of the Maputo Protocol, to prepare reports on the situation of women's rights in African and propose recommendations to be adopted by the Commission, and to draft resolutions for adoption by the Commission.

The current Special Rapporteur, Ms. Lucy Asuagbor, has been Chairperson of the ACHPR Committee for the Protection of the Rights of PLHIV, a member of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa, and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders. In her personal capacity, she is currently a Judge at the Supreme Court of Yaoundé, Cameroon. She holds a Bachelor of Laws Degree from the University of Lagos, Nigeria, a Masters Degree in International Law from the International Maritime Law Institute –Malta, and a Diploma from the School of Magistracy –Yaoundé.

Website: <http://www.achpr.org/mechanisms/rights-of-women/>

Email: [au-banjul@africa-union.org](mailto:au-banjul@africa-union.org)

***The Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI)***



The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women was adopted in Belém do Pará, Brazil, in 1994. It proclaims that violence against women constitutes a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Belém do Pará Convention established for the first time the development of mechanisms for the protection and defense of women's rights in the struggle to eliminate violence against their physical, sexual and psychological integrity, in both the public and private spheres.

[MESECVI](#) is a systematic and permanent multilateral evaluation methodology that is based on exchange and technical cooperation between the States Party to the Convention and a [Committee of Experts](#). MESECVI analyzes progress in the implementation of the Convention by the States Party, as well as persistent challenges to an effective State response to violence against women.

Website: <http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/about.asp>

Email: [mesecvi@oas.org](mailto:mesecvi@oas.org)

### ***The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Council of Europe (GREVIO)***



for women.

GREVIO is the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) by the Parties. The Istanbul Convention is the first legally-binding instrument in Europe in the field of violence against women and domestic violence, and in terms of scope, the most far reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights. It aims at zero tolerance for such violence and is a major step forward in making Europe and beyond a safer place

GREVIO draws up and publishes reports evaluating legislative and other measures taken by the Parties to give effects to the provisions of the Convention. In cases where action is required to prevent a serious, massive or persistent pattern of any acts of violence covered by the Convention, GREVIO may initiate a special inquiry procedure. GREVIO may also adopt, where appropriate, general recommendations on themes and concepts of the Convention. GREVIO is composed of fifteen members with multidisciplinary expertise in human rights, gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence or in the assistance to and protection of victims.

Website: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio>

Email: [conventionviolence@coe.int](mailto:conventionviolence@coe.int)

#### **How can your organization engage with these mechanisms?**

In accordance with their respective mandates and working methods, international organizations, governments, national institutions and other stakeholders can engage with each of these mechanisms jointly or separately in relation to work conducted at the national, regional and international level by supporting implementation of the mechanisms' thematic and country specific recommendations on elimination of violence and discrimination against women. The mechanisms can be called upon to participate in conferences and seminars and to provide technical assistance. For the UN Special Procedures mandates, organizations can engage with their work by providing tailored briefs prior to country visits, providing submissions relevant to upcoming thematic reports, or by suggesting individual cases of human rights concern that might be relevant for a communication to States. Organizations can submit reports to the CEDAW Committee and contribute to the development of general recommendations of the Committee. Such reports could also include information on regional mechanisms' work.

Cooperation with civil society remains a strategic priority for the implementation of mechanisms' recommendations, helping them to advance in their thematic priorities, and supporting their missions, joint strategies and initiatives. Civil society actors, NHRIs and regional mechanisms are considered strategic partners also for gathering information and

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data on human rights violations at the local level and sharing their perspective on mechanisms' thematic work.

International organizations, UN entities, governments, national institutions and stakeholders can also engage with these mechanisms collectively through this platform as it is intended to encourage joint initiatives on certain topics and certain countries and regions. For this purpose, the contact points are staff at OHCHR supporting the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women at: [vaw@ohchr.org](mailto:vaw@ohchr.org).