# PERMANENT MISSION OF DENMARK TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by

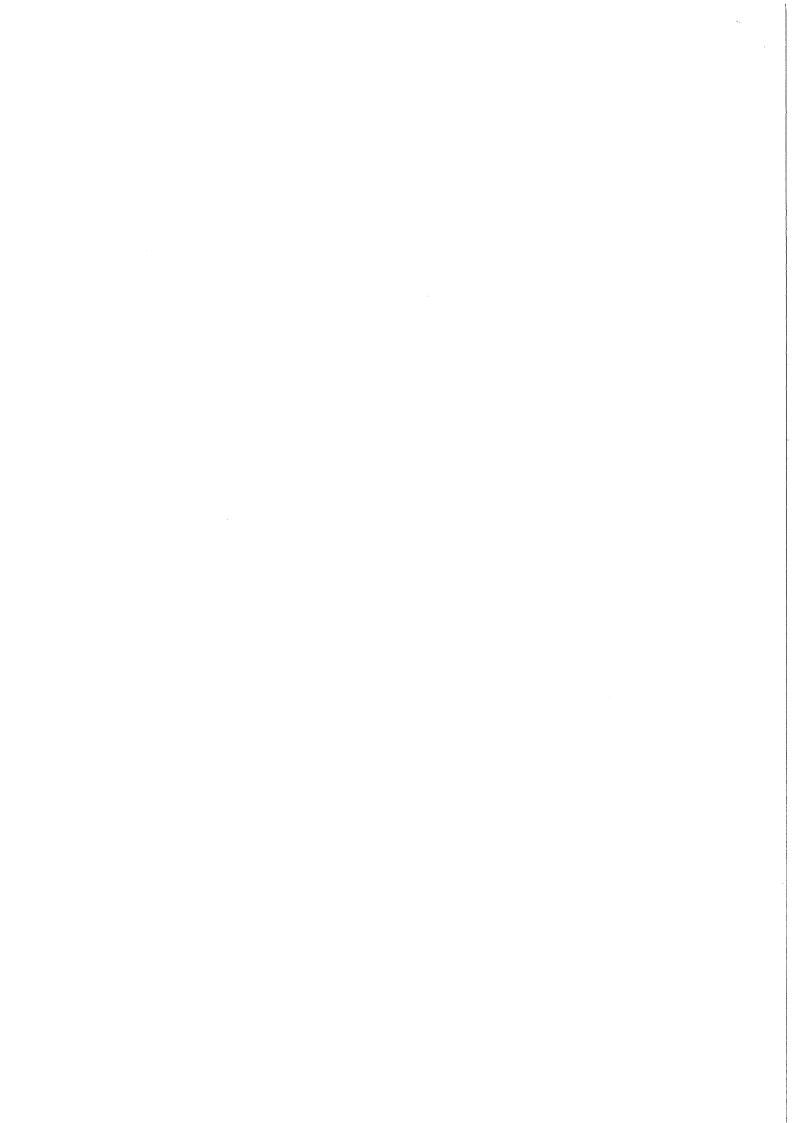
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# Commission on the Status of Women 57<sup>th</sup> Session General Discussion 5 March 2013

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# Madame Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome this opportunity to address the Commission on the Status of Women at its 57th session. While I would like to associate myself with the statement made by Ireland on behalf of the European Union, I would like to share with you some important aspects and lessons learned relating to our efforts to eradicate violence against women and girls and thus to achieve genuine gender equality in Denmark as well as internationally.

## Madame Chair,

Today we mark the opening of two weeks focus on ending violence against women and girls.

The international community and countries around the world have made considerable progress in preventing and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

However, since violence still prevails in all our societies around the world, violence affects millions of women and their children on a daily basis, and violence has significant economic costs and undermines economic growth and development.

Moreover, women's rights are under attack at various levels. Due to conservatism and antifeminist agendas gender equality is under pressure. It is hence of crucial importance that we ensure a renewed political commitment in order to allow all women and girls full enjoyment of their human rights as well as of their sexual and reproductive rights.

The prevalence of violence against women and girls may differ in magnitude and forms from country to country and region to region, but no country – including my own, Denmark, – and no region has yet freed itself of this plague.

Despite major progress in legal frameworks it is estimated that as many as seven in ten women experience physical or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime, usually at the hands of an intimate partner. Meanwhile, systematic targeting of women in brutal sexual violence is a hallmark of modern conflicts.

Although equality between women and men is guaranteed in the constitutions of 139 countries inadequate laws and implementation gaps make these guaranties hollow promises. Well-functioning legal and justice systems can be a vital mechanism for women to achieve their rights. Actually, well-functioning legal and justice systems are prerequisites for women's enjoyment of the human rights at an equal footing with men. But the reality is that in many contexts the infrastructure of justice is failing women, which manifests itself in poor services and hostile attitudes form the very people whose duty it should be to protect and promote those women's rights.

#### Madame Chair,

The root cause of both violence and restrictions on women's exercise of their sexual and reproductive rights is the same, namely; systematic gender discrimination and dominance, by others, over women's sexual lives and decision-making. This is the same reality faced by all women subjected to violence all across the world, in the developing or developed world.

Several forms of violence against women violate sexual and reproductive health and rights, including policy, practice or action that intervenes in or inhibits girls' and women's informed, autonomous decision-making about their own bodies, sexuality, pregnancy and childbearing.

The relationships between violence against women and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are significant for obtaining gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. I therefore expect the agreed conclusions from this CSW-session to emphasize the need for strengthened sexual and reproductive rights for all.

Violence against women and girls is a man-made plague. Therefore, it is also a plague that can be eradicated by changing men's attitude and behaviour. I believe that the key word is implementation. The international community already has a large number of important conventions and treaties in place, for instance the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. Let's implement it. Countries have the duty to abolish laws and policies that discriminate against women and girls. Citizens have the right to demand from their governments that such laws and policies be changed.

#### Madame Chair

The Danish Government has waged a determined fight to combat domestic violence.

Legislative and policy frameworks have been put in place to ensure progress, and institutional mechanisms have been set up to;

- ensure protection and support for victims
- to prosecute perpetrators as well as treatment programmes for male offenders to end the circle of violence
- to improve knowledge and
- to heighten awareness in our society

And our efforts have had an effect; fewer women fall victims of violence in Denmark today compared to just 10 years ago.

But our end goal has yet to be achieved - zero violence against women and girls!

Recognizing that gender based violence is one factor that can be a key barrier to women's political and economic participation Denmark is committed to implementing targeted and innovative activities in order to further bring down the numbers of victims.

#### Madame Chair

We need to take action now! Victims around the world deserve our full attention and political commitment.

We need to ensure the institutional set up as well as initiate debates on how to eliminate sociocultural attitudes and beliefs that tolerate violence against women and girls.

Efforts must be made to change cultures, practices, social norms and attitudes that condone violence against women and girls in all settings, including through leadership and community mobilization as well as through awareness raising. We must tackle the root causes and risk

factors that underlie violence by addressing gender stereotypes and the promotion of respectful relationships.

Also, we need to ensure access to good quality, integrated sexual and reproductive health services as well as access to comprehensive sexuality education that promotes skills building for relationship based on gender equality and human rights.

And finally we need to focus on various means to support and enable boys and men to take responsibility for their <u>own</u> behaviour in order to create a climate of zero tolerance for violence against women and girls. However, programs for boys and men should in no way reduce priority and funding for programs that support and provide opportunities for girls and women.

# Madame Chair

As part of the new global initiative; Equal Futures Partnership programme which was launched last year, Denmark has initiated a new national project aimed at increasing awareness of violence in the family and capacity building among all civil servants in municipalities.

Besides the issue of domestic violence Denmark is committed to ensuring inclusive policies and strategies to eliminate other forms of violence against all women and girls, like sexual violence, violence against women with disabilities, indigenous women, migrant women, adolescent girls, and honor related crimes.

Also, the Government has taken legislative and policy measures as well as established the necessary institutional mechanisms to support victims of human trafficking as well as ensuring the prosecution of traffickers and prevention activities.

## Madame Chair,

Violence against women and girls is a specifically horrific aspect of gender inequality. More than 40 years ago in this very city of New York the ex-Beatle — John Lennon — cried out very loud and clear against the inequality of women and men and the suffering of women. He did it with harsh words: "Woman is the slave to the slaves" and he continued "Think about it ... do something about it"! This is what we are all here to do: to think about the status of women all over the world and to do something about it. You and I have the power to do something about the undignified status of the vast majority of the world's women and girls — let's do something about it.

For my part - in conclusion – I can assure you of the Danish Government's unwavering commitment to combat all forms of violence against women and girls all over the world. We are here to cooperate with you today and the forthcoming weeks to ensuring further progress.

Thank you