

Honorable Chair, distinguished delegates, dear all:

I stand before you on behalf of half a million women from 75 women's organizations in Norway organized under FOKUS—Forum for Women and Development. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

I would like to make three points:

Firstly: Many states still lack specific legislation to deal with violence against women, including domestic violence, marital rape, incest, FGM, trafficking, and forced and early marriage. In those States that have such laws, the implementation of existing legislation is often far from effective.

Although almost universally ratified, the CEDAW convention has the highest number of reservations of any human rights treaty. At the same time, the CEDAW Convention addresses violence against women only implicitly, and the CEDAW committee has little power to demand changes in national legislation.

In order to remedy these deficiencies, we need a specific **UN convention on violence against women**. The convention should clearly define violence against women and contain a comprehensive set of legally binding standards to combat it. In addition, the convention should be framed within the wider context of gender equality and discrimination against women.

It is crucial that, in addition to the convention, the Member States adopt a strong and effective monitoring mechanism. The mechanism should be independent, inclusive of civil society, and should provide for binding recommendations.

Secondly: In recent years, the extent of human trafficking has increased dramatically. As the recent report by the UN Office on Drugs and Crimes confirms, trafficking in women for sexual exploitation is the most prevalent form of human trafficking. The Palermo Protocol calls upon governments to prevent such exploitation and limit the demand that fuels the market. The Nordic countries of Sweden, Norway and Iceland have taken such steps by criminalizing the purchase of sex. The legislation in these countries penalizes the customers, while women in prostitution are regarded as victims. We applaud these efforts and call upon all Member States to adopt similar measures. By doing so, your government would send a loud and clear message to criminal networks that your country is not open to business for them.

Finally: Any factor of discrimination robs women of social and cultural capital necessary to protect and defend themselves.

For this reason, member states must adopt holistic approaches to violence against women, taking into consideration the multiple, intersectional, and overlapping forms of violence and discrimination.

This is why we call upon you to ratify all UN human rights treaties and optional protocols, without reservations, and to devise comprehensive action plans to tackle both gender inequality and other identity and situational factors that together produce violence against women.

I thank you for your time and attention.