

**PARITY
NOW!**

Report **EWL CSW70**

Commission on the Status of Women
70th Edition - New York - 2026

European Women's Lobby



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EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

CSW 70 statement and side-event

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MARCH 2026

General report on CSW70

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) attended the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70). This annual multilateral meeting on women's rights took place at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York from 9 to 19 March 2026, bringing together representatives of Member States, UN entities and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organisations from all regions of the world.

This year's priority theme focused on *ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers.*

This focus is particularly relevant, as no country has achieved full legal equality, and women globally hold only 64 per cent of the legal rights enjoyed by men. According to the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres:

We must unite to deliver on the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Beijing+30 Action Agenda. By fighting discriminatory laws and practices — and defending the progress already achieved — we can ensure the dignity, opportunity and freedom all women deserve.

— António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

37-1

Agreed
Conclusions
adopted, with 6
abstentions

64%

Of the legal rights
enjoyed by men
are held by women
globally

43-1

Resolution on
Women, the Girl
Child and HIV/AIDS,
0 abstentions

9-19

March 2026 —
duration of the
CSW in New York

For the first time in the Commission's history, the outcome document was adopted by a recorded vote. Following a negotiation process marked by tensions and political backlash, the CSW70 Agreed Conclusions were adopted by 37 votes in favour, to one against (the United States), with six abstentions.¹ This, however, demonstrates that the majority of Member States remain committed to advancing gender equality and women's rights.

In this context, the Agreed Conclusions highlight the link between systemic failures in justice systems and persistent gender inequality affecting women, girls, and marginalised groups. These inequalities include gaps in opportunities, shortcomings in policy implementation, as well as economic and social barriers that prevent victims from accessing justice. The Agreed Conclusions call for a legal framework free of discrimination, exclusion, and violence against women. Through this instrument, Member States commit to building more inclusive governance, improving access to legal aid and legal empowerment, and preventing future violations.²

The 70th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) wrapped up with the adoption of a resolution titled "Women, the Girl Child and HIV/AIDS,"³ by a recorded vote of 43 in favour to 1 against, with 0 abstentions. Meanwhile, in the other business part, a proposal by the United States to define "gender" strictly as men and women, under the draft titled "Protection of Women and Girls through Appropriate Terminology," was blocked following the adoption of an EU-led no-action motion, as it conflicted with previously agreed Beijing framework language.

In closing remarks, the Executive Director of UN Women, Sima Bahous, stressed that the Commission sent a strong message that women's and girls' rights matter, even in times of backlash. She also said she looked forward to "opening the Commission next year alongside a Madam Secretary-General"

Lastly, the Commission approved its provisional agenda and documentation for its seventy- first session.⁴ Next year (2027), CSW71 will focus on accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

¹ See picture below

² Economic and Social Council (E/CN.6/2026/L.2), Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and addressing structural barriers – Agreed Conclusions

³ Economic and Social Council (E/CN.6/2026/L.3), Women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS.

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CSW70 Agreed Conclusions – recorded vote • Opening of the session and ministerial segment

⁴ Economic and Social Council (E/CN.6/2026/L.5), Provisional agenda and documentation for the seventy-first session of the Commission



AGREED CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the Agreed Conclusions

In the context of today's overlapping global crises, the rise of technology-facilitated violence, and increasing pushback from certain countries, notably the United States, negotiations this year have been particularly complicated to reach. Amid these tensions, the European Union has kept a united front, safeguarding their commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), CEDAW and other international conventions.

The European Women's Lobby welcomes the adoption of the Agreed Conclusions⁵, some key strengths of the Agreed Conclusions include:

Ensuring access to Justice for all women and girls

The Agreed Conclusions place strong emphasis on improving access to justice, recognising the need for systems that are accessible, affordable, timely, and solution-oriented to the diverse realities of all women and girls. Thereby enabling them to seek and obtain effective remedies from competent, independent, and impartial justice institutions when their rights are violated.

While we welcome the recognition of the need for safe, effective, accessible, and affordable victim- and survivor-centred pathways, we strongly urge that justice reforms be genuinely centred on victims and survivors. This includes ensuring their meaningful and systematic participation in policy-making processes.

We support the language of the text recognising the need to strengthen justice for all women, including, but not limited to, women and girls with disabilities, migrant women and girls, women migrant workers, African women and girls, women and girls of African descent, Indigenous women and girls, those in local communities, women and girls in rural, remote and maritime areas, women and girls living in vulnerable situations, adolescent girls, older women, women and girls belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and women in detention and in imprisonment.

However, this section does not sufficiently reflect present realities. Such commitments are unlikely to be realised without the meaningful and systematic inclusion of these groups in decision-making and negotiation processes.

⁵ Economic and Social Council (E/CN.6/2026/L.2), Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and addressing structural barriers – Agreed Conclusions

Furthermore, the absence of explicit reference to certain marginalised groups (LGBTQ+), reflects ongoing political resistance and backlash to human rights.

We also welcome the call to systematically mainstream a gender perspective across all stages of law and policy-making, including through the development of gender impact assessments for new and existing legislation. However, this commitment remains largely aspirational in the absence of binding measures, mandatory implementation, and robust accountability mechanisms. Without these, the potential for transformative, structural change in justice systems is significantly limited.

Prevention and elimination of discriminating laws and practices

The EWL welcomes the reference to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination as a key barrier for access to justice and a major impediment for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. In this regard, we support the call to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices that perpetuate gender inequality, while mainstreaming equal participation and economic empowerment into all policies and programmes aiming at ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls.

EWL also strongly supports the call “to adopt and implement laws and other time-bound targeted policies and, where appropriate, temporary special measures, in order to eliminate all barriers, including structural and systemic barriers, that prevent or restrict the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women.” We emphasise that equal representation at the negotiation table is a critical step towards addressing and ultimately ending violence against women.

Prevent and eliminate violence against women

We align with the commitment “to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, online and offline by holding perpetrators accountable and ending impunity and ensuring victims’ and survivors’ timely and effective access to justice and to just and effective remedies, and reparations.” We particularly welcome the emphasis “on establishing and strengthening accessible, confidential, safe and effective reporting and justice mechanisms for cases of violence, and guarantees of non-revictimization, while ensuring that women and girls are informed of their rights in seeking redress through such mechanisms.”

Despite the rollback in some areas, we commend the reaffirmation of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

The attention to enabling legislative processes that allow for meaningful, safe, and inclusive participation by civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders is significant and reflects a commitment to participatory governance. However, EWL remains concerned that, without adequate and sustained funding and support for these organisations, such commitments risk being undermined and remain vulnerable to rollback.

WHAT IS NEXT?

While the Agreed Conclusions are not legally binding, they represent a moral imperative for Member States to translate these into concrete actions. As all EU Member States voted in favour of this Agreed Conclusion, we wish to stress the importance of follow-up to these conclusions. Equality cannot be achieved by declarations alone; it requires laws, institutions, funding, active involvement of civil society and political will.



MEETING BETWEEN THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL AND CSO:

The Townhall Meeting with the UN Secretary-General and Civil Society in the margins of CSW70

On Tuesday, 11 March 2026, during CSW70, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, invited civil society organisations to a discussion at UN Headquarters in New York.

He opened the meeting by congratulating CSOs' commitment to "*shaking the foundations of privilege*" in a male-dominated world, recognising their vital role in promoting justice, dignity, and equality globally. In the light of this year's theme, he highlighted persistent power imbalances across politics, the economy, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, alongside a growing backlash against women's rights fuelled by disinformation and culture wars. He urged participants not to remain silent, stating: "*The last thing I want from you today is silence.*"

During the discussion, participants raised several pressing issues. The most prominent concern was the proposed merger of UN Women and the UN agency Population Fund dedicated to reproductive health, maternal care and population development (UNFPA). Questions were raised as to why these agencies were the first to be considered for streamlining and called for a careful review of alternatives. The Secretary-General explained that the merger is intended to create a stronger agency while maintaining both mandates and pooling resources to increase effectiveness.

Finally, reaffirming the UN's commitment to civil society, Mr Guterres announced a meeting in July to consult on the UN80 initiative for institutional reform. He encouraged participants to continue their advocacy and pledged his support, stating:

You can count on me to be with you, now and always, and together, we will say loud and clear: no to the pushback, no to the rollback, no to going back, no surrender.

— António Guterres, UN Secretary-General



Townhall meeting the UN Secretary • General and civil society.



11 MARCH 2026

Meeting between the CSO representative and the EU delegation to the CSW

At the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70), the EWL was represented within the EU Delegation by its Policy Officer, Sabrina Terentjew.

On Wednesday 11 March, she delivered her speech before the European Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, Hadja Lahbib, presenting EWL's key concerns and policy recommendations on ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls.

In her intervention, she underlined that violence against women and girls remains widely underreported, inadequately prosecuted, and insufficiently addressed. Drawing on recent examples from Spain, Belgium, and France, she illustrated persistent systemic failures in judicial responses.

To address these challenges, she presented **six key recommendations** to policymakers:

- 1 Eliminate discriminatory laws and practices that perpetuate gender inequality;
- 2 Establish gender mainstreaming with an intersectional approach in ALL activities and policies of the EU;
- 3 Provide for affordable, high-quality legal aid and accessible information about rights and remedies;
- 4 Make judicial institutions gender-responsive and trauma-informed;
- 5 Protect FULLY the safety, dignity, privacy and confidentiality of victims throughout judicial proceedings;
- 6 Deliver justice reforms centred on victims and survivors and to actively include them in the policy-making process.

She also emphasised the importance of equal representation, advocating for full gender parity (50–50) in all decision-making spaces as a necessary condition for effectively combating violence against women. In this regard, she highlighted our “Parity Now!” campaign, aligned with the UN CEDAW’s General Recommendation No. 40., that calls on policymakers in all Council of Europe countries, as well as to the EU and international institutions, to make parity a reality.

In conclusion, she emphasised the importance of collective action, welcomed the European Commission’s commitment to advancing women’s rights, notably through the new Gender Equality Strategy and the revision of the Victims’ Rights Directive. She reaffirmed EWL’s support for the European Commission’s efforts to achieve meaningful change.



Meeting with Civil Society Representatives and the European • Union Commissioner on Equality, Preparedness and Crisis • Management Ms. Hadja LAHBIB



EWL SIDE EVENT 11 MARCH 2026

Parity Now: Ending the Gender Power Gap

During the CSW70, EWL organised a side event titled “*Parity Now: Ending the Gender Power Gap*,” focusing on achieving 50–50 parity in all decision-making bodies across every sphere and level of society. The event took place on Wednesday, 11 March, from 10:00 to 13:00 (NY time).⁶

This side event provided an opportunity for EWL to raise visibility for its PARITY NOW! campaign. CSW70 offered a valuable space for global exchange and dialogue, bringing together experts, decision-makers, and organisations from diverse countries and regions to share experiences and good practices in advancing gender-balanced representation worldwide.

In her opening remarks, EWL President Dina Loghin highlighted the urgency of closing the gender power gap and fostering equality in all spheres of decision-making.

The event featured three keynote speakers: Nicole Ameline, Expert of the United Nations Human Rights Advisory Committee; Petra Bayr, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; and Alena Mastantuono, Vice-President for Budget at the European Economic and Social Committee. Their collective message emphasised that equal representation of women in decision-making bodies is a fundamental principle requiring both a new normative framework and concrete political commitment.

Panel Discussion I : “Parity Now: Achieving fifty-fifty parity in power, how can this gap be tackled concretely.”

This first panel discussion addressed concrete strategies to close the gender power gap, featuring inputs from four speakers:

Anne Negre, Vice President of EWL, started by introducing the PARITY NOW! campaign, launched on 27 January 2026 and based upon CEDAW General Recommendation No.40 on gender parity. She explained that the campaign included over 1000 letters to policymakers and stakeholders calling for 50–50 parity, i.e. full equality in the participation and representation of women and men in all decision-making bodies, across all spheres and levels of society, including political, economic, and social areas.

⁶ EWL website “[EWL and its Members are pushing for change at CSW70.](#)”

Recipients of the letter included Heads of State, relevant ministers in national governments, EU and international institutions and decision-making bodies, as well as NGOs and other partners. To date, three responses had been received.

Christa Schweng, President of the Equality Group within the European Economic and Social Committee, highlighted the Group's work in advancing gender equality through concrete actions, reviewing measures, and monitoring outcomes based on clear gender impact guidelines. She also emphasised awareness-raising efforts, noting that for International Women's Day, the Group organised a "Women and Media" event, which shed light on the challenges faced by female journalists today.

Sasa Gavric, Adviser on Gender Issues at OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), stressed that gender equality in politics is often not treated as a national strategic priority. Instead, it is frequently left to political parties to adopt ad hoc measures such as quotas. He presented a seven-step "Gender Equality Road Map," designed to ensure sustainable parity in political representation as part of broader policy reviews and gender equality strategies.

Ligia Nobrega, Senior gender expert working at the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), emphasised the importance of creating accessible, harmonised, and user-friendly entry points for evidence on gender equality in decision-making. She presented the approach used in the EIGE report "*Women and Men in Decision-Making*", which helped lay the foundation for EU legal instruments such as the Women on Boards Directive. The report aims to make gender equality data available and actionable for policymakers and stakeholders.

Panel Discussion II : " Parity Now: From good practice to structural change"

This second panel discussion, we heard from real change in different regions in the world.

Iliana Balabanova, EWL member, covered the Central European, Baltic, and Balkan States (CEBBS). She stressed that persistent gender inequalities in decision-making are rooted in patriarchal structures. The CEBBS report, based on national contributions, notes women's underrepresentation, limited political will, and resistance to structural change.

Auður Önnu Magnúsdóttir, Managing director of Icelandic Women's Rights Association, highlighted that in Iceland, meaningful progress has been largely driven by grassroots women's movements rather than political actors. Social reforms such as parental leave, free healthcare, and education, combined with resilience, have helped to reinforce long-term societal change.

Nicola Grigg, New Zealand's Minister for Women, highlighted her country's proud history of advancing women's rights, noting that in 1893 it became the first self-governing nation to grant women the right to vote. She emphasised that women's participation in decision-making improves outcomes for women, families, and society. Her office continues to focus on closing pay and retirement (pension) gaps, supporting women into leadership, and addressing persistent barriers in senior private-sector roles.

In her closing remarks, **Mary Collins**, Secretary General of EWL, reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to achieving parity in democracy, emphasising both numerical equality and meaningful engagement, alongside access to justice, prevention of violence, and the closing of gender pay gaps.

1,000+

Letters to policymakers in the **PARITY NOW!** campaign

50-50

Parity goal in all decision-making bodies

No. 40.

CEDAW General Recommendation underpinning the campaign

3

Keynote speakers, across two panel discussions



"Parity Now: Ending the Gender Power Gap," organised by the EWL

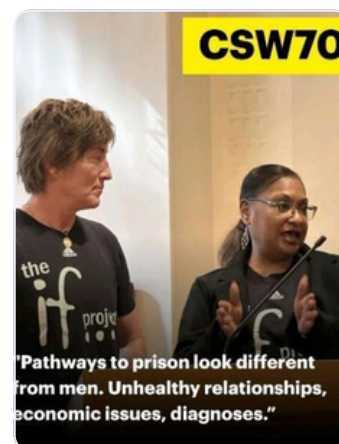
3

ENGAGEMENTS

Participation in additional Side-Events

The EWL also participated in many side events including:

- “Women for sale in the digital era,” with our Swedish Women’s Lobby



- The EU and Cyprus Reception for the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, with European Commissioner for equality, preparedness and crisis management - Hadja Lahbib and Commissioner for Gender Equality of Cyprus – Josie Christodoulou.



- Radicalization of Education in Afghanistan: Accountability, Justice, and the Beijing+30 Commitments



- **High-level Meeting of the Group of Friends for Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls - "Five Years On: Securing Achievements and Ensuring Durable Impact"**



- **Regional organisations as accelerators of gender parity in national politics, with OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)**



- **Closing the Gender Pay Gap: Eliminating Legal and Structural Barriers to Achieve Social and Economic Justice**



The EWL delegation

The European Women's Lobby has been engaging in the CSW for many years. This year the EWL delegation was represented by:

Dina Loghin - President

Mary Collins - Secretary General

Lama Jaghjougha - Programme Director

Sabrina Terentjew - Policy Officer

Adele Philtjens - Policy Officer



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REFERENCE MATERIALS

Annexes

All information regarding our side event “Parity Now: Ending the Gender Power Gap” are available on our website: [here](#). In addition, EWL has sent a private invitation to our members, and shared the final agenda and concept note with the participants.

Annex I: Invitation EWL side event CSW70, 11 March 2026



CSW70 Side Event

Dear EWL members,

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is kindly reaching out regarding the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70).

To help coordinate members' participation, we would appreciate receiving information on which member(s) of your organisation will be attending CSW70. We are also happy to facilitate connections between participants and to share information about members' side events.

In the context of its participation in CSW70, EWL will organise a side event:

Parity Now: Ending the Gender Power Gap calls for the institutionalisation of equal representation of women and men in all spheres of decision-making at national, European, and international levels.

Date: Wednesday, 11 March
Time: 10:00 -13:00 (New York time)
Venue: Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations: 666 Third Avenue, 31st Floor

Please complete [this form](#) to:

- register to participate in EWL's side event; and
- inform us of your organisation's presence at CSW70

Please note that participation in the side event is limited to 60 participants, and we will only be able to accept a maximum of 2 persons from the same organisation.

We look forward to connecting with you and to welcoming you during CSW70.

In solidarity,
 The European Women's Lobby

Annex II: Agenda EWL side event CSW70, 11 March 2026

FINAL AGENDA

Wednesday 11 March, 10:00 - 13:00 (NY Time)

Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, 666 Third Avenue,
31st Floor

10:00 – 10:10 Welcoming remarks

> Dina Loghin, President
of the EWL

10:10 – 10:40 Keynote speeches

Introduction to the General Recommendation NO. 40
> Nicole Ameline, Expert of the United Nations Human Rights Advisory
Committee
Introduction to the European legal framework
> Petra Bayr, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
The role of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in advancing
parity democracy > Alena Mastantuono, EESC Vice-President for Budget

10:40 – 12:40 Panel discussion

The event will be moderated by Mary Collins, Secretary General of
the EWL, and Edite Kalnina, Vice-President of the EWL

**Parity Now: Achieving fifty-fifty parity in power, how can this gap be tackled
concretely? (1 hour)**

> Anne Negre, Vice-President of the European Women's Lobby and Special
Advisor to the President of University Women of Europe – participating online
> Christa Schweng, President of the Equality Group
> Saša Gavrić, Adviser on Gender Issues at OSCE Office for Democratic
Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
> Ligia Nobrega, Senior gender expert working at the European Institute for
Gender Equality - participating online
Q&A

Parity Now: From good practice to structural change (50 min)

> Auður Önnu Magnúsdóttir, Managing director of Icelandic Womens' Rights
Association
> Nicola Grigg, Minister of State for Trade and Investment, Minister for
Women,
Associate Minister of Agriculture (Horticulture) and Associate Minister for
ACC – video message
> Iliana Balabanova, EWL member
Q&A

12:50 – 13:00 Concluding remarks

> Mary Collins, Secretary General of the EWL

Annex III: Concept Note EWL side event CSW70, 11 March 2026

PARITY NOW: ENDING THE GENDER POWER GAP

Side event of the 70th of the Commission of the Status of Women

WEDNESDAY, 11 MARCH, 10:00 – 13:00 (NY TIME)

Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, 666 Third
Avenue, 31st Floor

EWL will attend the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 2026) that will take place at the UN Headquarters in New York from 9 to 19 March 2026.

CSW themes:

- Priority theme: Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers
- Review theme: 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

In the context of its participation in CSW, EWL will organise a side event.

Topic: 50-50 Parity in all decision-making bodies across all spheres and levels of society.

Relevance: This theme is closely linked to the CSW review theme. In addition, it will provide an opportunity for EWL to give visibility to its campaign PARITY NOW!, launched on 27 January 2026 and based upon CEDAW General Recommendation n40 on parity. On that date, EWL sent a simultaneous letter to policymakers and stakeholders calling for 50-50 parity, i.e. full equality in the participation and representation of women and men in all decision-making bodies, across all spheres and levels of society, including political, economic, and social areas. The recipients include Heads of State, relevant ministers in national governments, EU and international institutions and decision-making bodies, as well as NGOs and other partners. Follow-up actions will take place on 8 March 2026, including engagement with the press.

The panel discussions will provide an opportunity for panellists to present their national and sectorial experiences and share best practices and concrete measures that have contributed to progress towards parity.

Join this global exchange bringing together experts, decision-makers and organisations from different countries and regions to share experiences and good practices in advancing 50-50 parity worldwide. Please note seating is limited; registration is required.

Contact: Sabrina Terentjew, terentjew@womenlobby.org; Adele Philtjens, Philtjens@womenlobby.org

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70TH SESSION

Statement and invitation to 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

• INVITATION

Commission on the Status of Women

Seventieth session

9-20 March 2026

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by the European Women's Lobby, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

• STATEMENT

The European Women's Lobby is the largest organisation of women's non-governmental organisations in the European Union, comprising over 2000 women's organisations expanding across 33 countries including European Union's Member States, accession countries and those part of the European Economic Area.

We welcome the Commission on the Status of Women 70 and the priority theme **“Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers”** and the review theme **“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”**. We need immediate action to accelerate equality between women and men in a fast changing tumultuous world and take a closer look of the achievements and challenges since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action.

GENERAL SITUATION

Despite notable progress since Beijing 1995, achieving full gender equality remains elusive. Persistent challenges include violence against women and girls, unequal political and economic participation, and the impacts of climate change, conflicts, and digital inequality. As last year marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we call for **accelerated, transformative action** to meet global gender equality goals, emphasizing the need for greater investment, accountability, and the equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels.

The European Women's Lobby is extremely concerned about the worldwide anti-gender movement, which seeks to undermine established human rights norms, challenge gender equality policies, and restrict the work of civil society actors focused on women's rights. The global community must unite and take action to counter this backlash in all its forms, including policy and legislative rollbacks, threats against feminist activists, organisations, academics, and institutions, as well as the shrinking of civic space—particularly in countries with declining democratic standards, where independent civil society is portrayed as a threat to national or traditional values.

A LIFE FREE FROM MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Male violence against women and girls remains a global and persistent issue with severe impacts that transcend borders. In Europe, inconsistent legislation across countries leaves women and girls facing violence with uneven protection and support. The link between the feminisation of poverty and vulnerability to violence is undeniable—women without financial independence are often unable to escape abusive partners or discriminatory work environments. There is an urgent need for the European Union and all United Nations Member States to end violence against women by adopting, implementing and improving gender-sensitive legislation. We welcome the adoption by the European Union of the first ever **European Union Directive (legislation) on combating violence against women and domestic violence** adopted in 2024, and the **European Union's ratification of the Istanbul Convention** in 2023. We call on the Member States of the European Union to transpose and implement the European Union Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence in the most comprehensive way to ensure inter alia effective access to justice.

More than ever, attention and resources should also be dedicated to the situation of women in conflicts particularly in peace and reconciliation. Twenty-five years after the adoption by the UN of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security agenda, the stark **absence of women in peace negotiations is very concerning**. Therefore, the European Women's Lobby calls for gender-balanced participation and leadership in all phases of peace and security, including conflict prevention, crisis response, and peace building.

In recent years, the rapid development of Information and Communication Technologies, including the rise in Artificial Intelligence has led to a troubling surge in cyber violence against women. Online harassment, stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and hate speech have become pervasive, further threatening women's safety in digital spaces and impacting on their full and effective participation in all areas of life, endangering democracy. Additionally, the rise of artificial intelligence has introduced new challenges. Many systems, developed with gender-blind algorithms, often fail to recognize or address gendered forms of abuse, reinforcing harmful biases and normalising online violence and discrimination.

The global community needs to **address cyber violence and to ensure that artificial intelligence technologies incorporate gender-sensitive frameworks**. Failure to address the threats of cyberviolence entails risks undermining progress made on gender equality and leaves women and girls vulnerable to new and evolving forms of violence.

ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

The European Women's Lobby is increasingly concerned that the backlash on women's reproductive rights in many regions threatens to reverse the gains made since the Beijing Platform for Action.

To reduce poverty and promote gender equality, it is crucial that women and girls have full access to sexual and reproductive health services and the ability to exercise control over family planning decisions. **The European Women's Lobby advocates for feminist sexuality education for all**, recognising education as a powerful driver of gender equality. Such education goes beyond biology, addressing the social, ethical, psychological, legal, and historical aspects of healthy and non-toxic relationships, based on consent, feminism, and women's rights. It also focuses on power dynamics between women and men, supporting a comprehensive understanding of sexual and reproductive health, rights and consent.

DECISION-MAKING

Equal representation in decision-making and leadership has been a long-standing issue of the European Women's Lobby for many years. The overall aim is to achieve parity democracy. While some progress has been made, **women remain under-represented in politics and decision-making across Europe**. While women have the same formal political rights as men, and some hold high positions, structural barriers prevent them from accessing decision-making roles. The European Women's Lobby welcomes the **CEDAW General Recommendation no 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems** adopted in October 2024 and which aims to guarantee fifty-fifty parity. We call on all States parties to implement this General Recommendation.

KEY TASKS

We call on the European Union, the UN Member states and stakeholders:

- Apply an **intersectional gender lens** to all fiscal, economic, digital, employment, climate and social policies and reforms.
- Conduct **systematic intersectional gender assessments** of economic, environmental and social policies to address the root causes of the feminisation of poverty.
- **Adopt a Care Deal**, recognising care as the foundation of a feminist economic model.
- Ensure women **have access to decent quality work**, including fair income, equal pay to close the gender pay and pension gaps, and adequate social protection. Special attention should be given to women with higher unemployment rates and lower wages, such as women with disabilities, migrant women, older women, and women in rural areas.
- Ensure that all women and girls **have access to their sexual and reproductive health and rights**.
- **Ratify ILO Convention 190** to eliminate violence in the workplace and promote women's and girls' access to education, training, and career opportunities.
- **Ratify and remove reservations to CEDAW** to fully align with international commitments to gender equality.
- States Parties **must adopt and implement CEDAW General Recommendation no 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems** to ensure parity democracy.
- Ensure gender balance in participation and leadership in the prevention management and resolution of conflicts and crisis, preparedness, security and peace building.

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EU

- Calls for an ambitious renewal of the European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030
- Adopt a Care Deal for Europe that is comparable to the European Green Deal and Digital Agenda, featuring designated investments, rooted in a human rights framework, and taking a holistic life-cycle approach.
- **Integrate gender budgeting into the long-term EU budget**, specifically within the upcoming 2028-2034 Multi Annual Financial Framework.
- **Incorporate a gender perspective into the upcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy.**
- **Implement and enforce the Istanbul Convention and EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence**, and once the recast of the Directive opens, ensure a robust, unified approach to addressing rape, cyberviolence and effective protection, prevention, and support mechanisms for victims, as well as access to justice and compensation.
- Establish binding rules for parity in the European Commission, including a **permanent dedicated standalone portfolio on gender equality.**
- **Establish a standalone Council of Ministers' formation** dedicated to gender equality.



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