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**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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives****Review of the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report reviews and assesses the extent to which Member States have implemented the agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. The report summarizes the impact, trends, gaps and challenges relating to action taken at the national level in implementing the agreed conclusions. The current review takes place following the recent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which violence against women and girls is acknowledged as an impediment to achieving gender equality and overall sustainable development, and identifies ways to support accelerated action to eliminate and prevent such violence.

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\* E/CN.6/2015/1.



## I. Introduction

1. At the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in 2015, Member States agreed on new working methods for the Commission (see Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/6). At its sixtieth session, the Commission will apply, for the first time, a new method in evaluating progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions relating to a priority theme from a previous session. This method will allow the Commission to review the agreed conclusions in a more rigorous manner and will encourage the effective implementation of its outcomes.

2. As part of the revised working methods, the Commission will also consider a report on progress made on the review theme at the national level (see *ibid.*). The review theme of the Commission at its sixtieth session, in 2016, will be “The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls”. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work for 2010-2014, the Commission had adopted agreed conclusions on that theme at its fifty-seventh session in 2013 (see [E/2013/27-E/CN.6/2013/11](#)). The current report is the first report reflecting the review of the implementation of the agreed conclusions and follows the recent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which made some important global normative advances, including by acknowledging violence against women and girls as an impediment to achieving gender equality and overall sustainable development. The current report will be accompanied by the presentation, on a voluntary basis, of lessons learned, challenges and best practices by Member States at the sixtieth session of the Commission.

3. The Commission has focused on the issue of discrimination and violence against women and girls as a priority theme or as a critical area of concern on four occasions: violence against women, at its forty-second session (1998); women’s human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, at its forty-seventh session (2003), on which it failed to adopt agreed conclusions; the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child, at its fifty-first session (2007); and the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, at its fifty-seventh session (2013).<sup>1</sup>

4. All the agreed conclusions on ending violence against women and girls have strengthened the global normative framework on this issue and have contributed to the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session of the Commission, for example, have expanded the global normative framework, emphasizing a comprehensive approach that includes a focus on prevention; addressing safety in public spaces; new risks posed by information, communication and technology, including cyberstalking and cyberbullying; the issue of gender-related killings; and the need to support and protect those who are committed to eliminating violence against women, such as women human rights defenders.

5. The agreed conclusions of the Commission have also influenced, and been reinforced through, the adoption of targets 5.2 and 5.3 of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely, the elimination of all forms of violence against women in the public and private spheres and the elimination of all harmful practices.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/previous-sessions/older-sessions>.

6. The present report assesses the extent to which Member States have implemented the agreed conclusions in the following areas: strengthening the implementation of legal and policy frameworks and accountability; addressing structural and underlying causes and risk factors to prevent violence against women and girls; strengthening multisectoral services, programmes and responses to violence against women and girls and improving the evidence-base for such responses.

7. The report summarizes the impact, trends, gaps and challenges relating to the implementation of the agreed conclusions at the national level. It also identifies ways to support and achieve the accelerated implementation of those conclusions.

8. The report draws on information received from Member States<sup>2</sup> for this report and for the report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2015/3).

## **II. Actions taken in response to the agreed conclusions**

### **A. Current context**

9. Violence against women remains a pervasive violation of human rights, as affirmed by Member States in the agreed conclusions. Violence against women and girls takes place in both stable and fragile settings and in many contexts, including in conflict, post-conflict and humanitarian contexts. Women and girls continue to face violence in the home, in public spaces, in war and, more recently, in the context of extremism. Furthermore, in their efforts to have that violence addressed, women human rights defenders themselves are often targeted. The root causes of all forms of violence against women and girls, regardless of settings and contexts, nevertheless remain the unequal power relations between men and women and gender inequality and discrimination in all facets of life. A comprehensive approach to preventing and responding to such violence is critical, especially in supporting the efforts of Member States, in collaboration with civil society, to meet international obligations and commitments on ending violence against women and girls. Civil society organizations have specific knowledge and expertise in the development and implementation of strategies to address violence against women and have played a particularly critical role in efforts in that regard. The agreed conclusions are the road map for implementing such an integrated and holistic approach.

10. Since the adoption of the agreed conclusions, a number of significant studies on the nature and extent of violence against women, both on women's experience of violence and reported or documented cases of violence, have been released by United Nations entities and other international organizations. They confirm the

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<sup>2</sup> Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Colombia, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Ecuador, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Mozambique, Namibia, Norway, Paraguay, Philippines, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and State of Palestine.

persistence of high rates of violence against women and girls, notwithstanding decades of action to address the problem.

11. In June 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners released the latest global estimates showing that 35 per cent of women had experienced intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual assault over their lifetime.<sup>3</sup> The evidence led WHO and its partners to conclude that violence against women was a global public health problem of epidemic proportions.<sup>3</sup> The most recent data on women's experience of violence, provided by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in 2015, confirms the high rates of physical and sexual violence, providing evidence that one in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime.<sup>4</sup>

12. The *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014*, released by WHO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also found that one in five girls had been sexually abused during childhood, with estimates from some countries showing that it was closer to one in three.<sup>5</sup>

13. UNODC, in its 2014 global study on homicide, found that of all the women killed in 2012, almost half had been killed by their family members or intimate partners, whereas the equivalent figure for male victims was just 6 per cent.<sup>6</sup> Another global report released by UNODC in 2014 on trafficking in persons found that women and girls constituted 70 per cent of all detected victims.<sup>7</sup> The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released two reports in 2014 showing that 133 million women and girls in 29 countries were affected by female genital mutilation<sup>8</sup> and that more than 700 million women alive today were married before their eighteenth birthday. More than one in three of those women married before age 15.<sup>9</sup> Child brides are often exposed to domestic violence, abuse and exploitation.<sup>10</sup> This demonstrates that there is an interlinkage between harmful practices and other forms of violence against women and girls.

<sup>3</sup> See World Health Organization (WHO) et al, *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence* (Geneva, 2013). Available from [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625\\_eng.pdf?ua=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf?ua=1).

<sup>4</sup> See *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8). Available from [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015\\_report.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_report.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Available from [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/status\\_report/2014/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/status_report/2014/en/).

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, contexts, data* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 14.IV.1). Available from [https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014\\_GLOBAL\\_HOMICIDE\\_BOOK\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.14.V.10). Available from [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP\\_2014\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP_2014_full_report.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: What might the future hold?* (New York, 2014). Available from [http://data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded\\_pdfs/corecode/FGM-C-Brochure-7\\_15-Final-LR\\_167.pdf](http://data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/FGM-C-Brochure-7_15-Final-LR_167.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects* (New York, 2014). Available from [http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child\\_Marriage\\_Report\\_7\\_17\\_LR.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> See United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "Marrying too young: End child marriage", 2012.

## **B. Impact of the agreed conclusions on other normative processes and work of the United Nations**

14. The important role of the Commission on the Status of Women in addressing gender inequality and the violation of women's human rights has been acknowledged by other normative and intergovernmental processes, and the need for closer collaboration with the Commission has been stressed (see [A/HRC/20/28](#), para. 52).

15. The impact of the agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session of the Commission is visible, for example, in the reports of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice. The Working Group addresses violence against women as a cross-cutting issue, for example, in its report on eliminating discrimination against women in political and public life, and it has urged States to adopt measures as prescribed in the agreed conclusions, such as the adoption of comprehensive legal frameworks (see [A/HRC/23/50](#), para. 87).

16. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences makes numerous references to the agreed conclusions of the Commission. Most notably, in her 20-year review of developments regarding violence against women, issued in 2014 ([A/HRC/26/38](#)), the Special Rapporteur states that the Commission has increased and refined the understanding of the issue, its causes and consequences, through a holistic human rights lens and has provided practical measures that can be implemented by Member States to increase their responsibility to act with due diligence in the elimination of all forms of violence against women (*ibid.*).

17. There has been an increase in efforts to address violence against women and girls owing to the increased momentum created by the adoption of the agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session. This can be inferred from the national reviews undertaken by Member States on the occasion of the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Nearly all 164 national reports described measures addressing violence against women. Examples of good practices from both developed and developing countries include enhanced support services and protocols for survivors (Paraguay and South Sudan); more consistent implementation of legal and policy frameworks and accountability measures (Algeria, Angola, Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Djibouti and Ecuador); increased funding (Australia, Austria, Canada and the United States of America) and improved monitoring and evaluation processes (Algeria, Australia, Mauritius and Mexico).

18. The work of United Nations entities in 2013 and 2014 was also influenced by the agreed conclusions. Many acknowledged the importance of the role of the Commission and reported on their active engagement in the preparations leading to the adoption of the agreed conclusions (see [A/69/222](#)).

19. The focus of the Commission on ending violence against women has also provided further impetus to the Commit Initiative of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).<sup>11</sup> At the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action, organized by UN-Women and the Government of China and held on 27 September 2015, many Heads of States and high-level government representatives

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<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/commit>.

committed to action to end violence against women and girls. The Global Conference on Ending Violence Against Women, co-organized by UN-Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and hosted by the Government of Turkey in Istanbul on 9 and 10 December 2015, also reaffirmed the importance of accelerating progress to end violence against women.

### **C. Specific areas of implementation of the agreed conclusions**

20. Member States have confirmed the importance of the agreed conclusions as a contributing factor in current and future work to end violence against women and girls (Colombia, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). Evidence consistently shows that the reduction and elimination of violence against women requires comprehensive and integrated approaches.

21. The fact that no country has managed to eliminate and prevent violence against women and girls and that the prevalence of such violence remains high globally demonstrates that more work must be done in the areas of both prevention and response. Many challenges still remain, including underreporting of cases and existing barriers to accessing justice and services; insufficient enforcement of legislation; limited allocation of adequate resources to implement laws, policies and programmes and insufficient monitoring and evaluation of their impact; limited reliable data to monitor progress; and inadequate coordination among multiple stakeholders. With respect to prevention, further efforts must be undertaken to stop violence from happening at all: zero tolerance is yet to become real.

22. Violence against women and girls occurs because of gender inequality, discrimination and the unequal power relations between men and women. Until the lives of women are fully valued in every respect, violence will remain a festering problem that is quietly tolerated. Therefore, in order to prevent such violence, efforts must focus on reforming the underlying structures that permeate all aspects of social, economic and political life and changing the social norms that continue to tolerate or perpetuate violence against women and girls.

23. At the same time, however, more comprehensive responses are required to address the consequences of such violence and to stop it from reoccurring. If there is not a strong focus on both prevention and response by countries, violence against women will continue unabated and with the unacceptable levels of impunity that currently exist.

24. While the agreed conclusions strongly advocate such an approach, there are very few examples of good practices that demonstrate how such comprehensive approaches to both prevention and response can be effectively implemented. However, both developed and developing countries have consistently provided good examples of the implementation of various initiatives regarding laws and policies, prevention, comprehensive and coordinated multisectoral services, and efforts to improve the evidence-base.

#### **Strengthening the implementation of legal and policy frameworks and accountability**

25. Under this section (see [E/2013/27-E/CN.6/2013/11](#), para. 34 (a)-(bb)), the agreed conclusions stress the importance of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without

reservations and the importance of addressing overall gender inequality and discrimination, through legal and policy frameworks, as key factors in combating violence against women.

26. The agreed conclusions urge stakeholders to adopt comprehensive legal and policy frameworks that not only prohibit and criminalize violence against women and girls, but also provide for prevention measures and support to and protection of victims and survivors. They also highlight the need for coordination among different actors and the participation of civil society representatives, including survivors' organizations, in the development of laws, policies and programmes.

27. Following the adoption of the agreed conclusions, Member States have continued to strengthen their legal and policy frameworks, criminalize forms of violence against women and address the needs of particular groups of women. Adherence to international and regional legal and policy frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Austria, Finland and Slovenia) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, is similarly an important step.

28. The agreed conclusions confirmed that violence against women is rooted in structural inequality between men and women. Legal frameworks to ensure gender equality and protect and promote women's human rights are necessary to address such violence. To that end, Member States have continued to enhance their national legal frameworks by incorporating relevant provisions into their constitutions (the Islamic Republic of Iran), enacting specific gender equality laws (Georgia and Italy) or laws aimed at strengthening women's economic empowerment, through increased minimum wages (the Philippines) or equal access to education (Kenya).

29. Member States have also acknowledged the interlinkages between gender inequality and violence against women by identifying such violence as a key priority in national action plans and strategies addressing overall gender inequality (Cambodia, the Czech Republic, the Philippines and Slovenia). Some national human rights strategies also include action to end violence against women (Georgia), while national development strategies tackle the challenge through improved access for women to economic resources (Uganda).

30. Addressing impunity through the enforcement of a strong legal framework is a key area of focus in the agreed conclusions. In addition to ensuring the accountability of perpetrators, the process of the adoption and enforcement of laws serves as a platform for public discussion, strengthens networks among stakeholders and conveys the message that such violence should not be tolerated. In response, States have revised their criminal codes and laws to criminalize specific acts of violence against women highlighted in the agreed conclusions, including domestic violence (Hungary), femicide (Colombia), child, early and forced marriage (Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom) or newly emerging forms of violence, such as cyberbullying (Hungary and Indonesia). Sentences and fines have been increased (Austria, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kenya and the United Kingdom), including for gang rape (India), and definitions of violence, such as rape, have been broadened (Finland, India and Latvia).

31. Good practice is emerging through the adoption of comprehensive laws that criminalize violence against women and provide preventative measures as well as measures that protect and support victims/survivors (Argentina and Uruguay). Some Member States have introduced laws that focus only on specific areas, for example, prevention (the Philippines) or strengthening support to victims/survivors through special funds and compensation for damages (India, Italy and the United States), including for victims/survivors in armed conflict (Colombia). In some countries, laws focus on particular groups of women, such as domestic workers (the Philippines and Saudi Arabia), or victims of trafficking in persons (Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States), indigenous women (the United States) and disabled women (the Islamic Republic of Iran).

32. Another good practice highlighted in the agreed conclusions is the availability of civil protection orders. Member States have reported on the introduction of such orders and their improved and increased application (Austria, Hungary and Kazakhstan) or their extension to emerging new forms, such as cyberbullying and stalking (Indonesia).

33. Member States must ensure access to justice to address impunity and to provide redress and support to victims/survivors. The agreed conclusions addressed that issue through a call for, inter alia, effective legal assistance; the provision of such assistance, however, remains a challenge globally. Good practices include raising awareness of existing laws (Uganda), amending criminal procedure codes or related laws to assist victims/survivors throughout the legal process, including through the provision of free legal assistance (Albania, Italy and the State of Palestine), and providing counselling and accompaniment for victims/survivors at court proceedings (Finland).

34. Effective national action plans are comprehensive and should cover all forms of violence. States, however, usually develop national action plans that address only one form of violence, often domestic violence. Good national action plans should include measures for prevention, support services, data collection and analysis (Finland, Namibia and Uganda) and should include specific timelines, benchmarks, the allocation of funds for their implementation, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (Cambodia). In line with the agreed conclusions, there appears to be an increased focus on the part of Member States regarding prevention, in order to change social and cultural norms (the Philippines), including through the engagement of communities in prevention work (Australia). The needs of specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination, such as women belonging to ethnic groups, lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders and intersexuals (Italy), migrant women (Hungary) and human rights defenders (Colombia), are also addressed in some plans.

35. The effective implementation of laws on violence against women still remains a challenge owing to lack of political will, lack of knowledge regarding laws, poor provision of and access to legal services, lack of capacity of courts, delays in hearing cases and absence of qualified staff and personnel (see [E/CN.6/2015/3](#), para. 124). The WHO *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014* reaffirms this, showing that although 80 per cent of 133 countries have adopted domestic/family violence legislation, only 44 per cent indicate its full enforcement.

36. Member States have stepped up efforts to address such challenges through the assessment of the implementation of laws (Turkey) or the appointment of



specialized advisers to support their implementation (Georgia). Strengthening the capacity of law enforcement officials and the judiciary could improve the enforcement of legislation, especially through regular training programmes that are endorsed by high-level officials.<sup>12</sup> Specialized courses and curriculums are provided at bar associations (Cambodia), and training programmes to enhance the gender sensitivity of police, prosecutors and judges and their knowledge about laws have been carried out in several countries (Cambodia, Georgia, Japan and Lithuania).

37. Lack of coordination among different actors is another barrier to the implementation of legal and policy frameworks and is addressed in the agreed conclusions. Effective practices to address that challenge include improved information-sharing among different actors and the establishment of wide-ranging institutional mechanisms, including at the local level (Australia, Cambodia, Colombia, the Philippines and Uganda).

38. Member States have identified increasing economic constraints and the resulting reduction in resources as additional barriers to implementation. The allocation of dedicated resources is crucial for the implementation of national laws, action plans and programmes on violence against women; however, only a few States reported on the provision of such resources.

39. Assessing the impact of laws and policies (Ireland and Turkey) is critical to determine whether such laws and policies are effective (Australia) and to inform future initiatives. Establishing specific institutions or independent bodies is an effective way to monitor the implementation of laws and policies (Finland and the Philippines). The important role that civil society organizations can play in the development, implementation and review of legal and policy frameworks was particularly stressed in the agreed conclusions. The impact of women's organizations on lasting and effective policy development to end violence against women and girls has been affirmed by a global analysis of 70 countries over four decades.<sup>13</sup> Strengthening collaboration with civil society by providing capacity development (Austria and Germany) or including civil society representatives in the development, implementation and review of strategies (Cambodia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Italy, Namibia and the Philippines) is good practice.

#### **Addressing structural and underlying causes and risk factors to prevent violence against women**

40. If violence is to be eliminated and prevented, it is imperative that the root causes of such violence be addressed in their entirety through the adoption and implementation of comprehensive approaches to prevention. The agreed conclusions focus on the importance of combating violence against women and girls by addressing the structural causes of such violence and the social norms and gender stereotypes that perpetuate it through measures that promote and protect the human rights of all women and promote their empowerment and participation at all levels.

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<sup>12</sup> See L. Heise, *What works to prevent partner violence — An evidence overview working paper* (2011).

<sup>13</sup> See Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975-2005", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 106, No. 3 (August 2012).

41. The agreed conclusions also called on Member States to establish educational programmes on respectful relationships and gender equality and to support awareness-raising and community mobilization. They further addressed the role of the media in combating violence against women and called for men and boys to take responsibility for their behaviour.

42. There is increasing recognition of the need to address prevention as a means of achieving the elimination of violence against women and girls. Following the adoption of the agreed conclusions, efforts to address such violence have appeared to grow, in particular in the area of prevention. Governments have increased their efforts to address knowledge gaps regarding effective interventions, and several United Nations entities have strengthened their collaboration on prevention in a more comprehensive and coordinated manner. For example, the United Kingdom has launched a five-year research programme entitled “What works to prevent violence”, which covers the prevention of violence against women and girls, including in humanitarian settings.<sup>14</sup> The programme is aimed at identifying effective strategies to build knowledge on what works in relation to prevention, through support to innovative practices, research and evaluation. Despite many remaining gaps, the evidence base has expanded, showing that interventions are effective and transformative when they combine multiple strategies aimed at all levels of society — community, family and individual.

43. Building on the preparatory work for the fifty seventh session of the Commission,<sup>15</sup> several United Nations entities, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNFPA, UN-Women and WHO, collaborated in their efforts to implement the agreed conclusions on the prevention of violence against women and girls. As a result, they have developed the first-ever inter-agency Framework to underpin action to prevent violence against women, which was launched on 25 November 2015.<sup>16</sup>

44. The Framework is aimed at strengthening a shared understanding and approach to prevention among different stakeholders, identifying the role that different sectors play and supporting the planning and implementation of evidence-informed strategies to prevent violence against women and girls.

45. The agreed conclusions stressed the importance of addressing gender inequality and discrimination as the structural causes of violence against women. Such interlinkages have been affirmed in Goal 5 of the newly adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The need to strengthen the interlinkages between gender inequality and violence against women has been reinforced by an analysis of data in 44 countries, which shows that gender inequality, including societal norms

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.whatworks.co.za/>.

<sup>15</sup> See the report of the expert group meeting on the prevention of violence against women and girls, available from <http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2012/11/report-of-the-egm-on-prevention-of-violence-against-women-and-girls.pdf?v=1&d=20141013T121501>.

<sup>16</sup> The Framework is available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/11/prevention-framework>.

supporting male authority over women, and discriminatory ownership rights, is associated with intimate partner violence at the country level.<sup>17</sup>

46. Such interlinkages are demonstrated by Member States' efforts to address gender inequality in international development (Ireland and Germany) by increasing women's access to decision-making, in both the public and private sectors (the Philippines), and to education (Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kenya), especially in science and technology (Italy). Tackling women's economic inequality is of particular importance, as stressed in the agreed conclusions. Member States have addressed this through interventions that encourage women's entrepreneurship (the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Kenya and the Philippines), strengthening access to employment (Colombia and Saudi Arabia) and ensuring equal pay for equal work by the private sector through monitoring and reporting procedures (Germany).

47. In the latter area, evidence is emerging of the effectiveness of microfinance programmes in reducing violence against women and girls in the long term. Such programmes are particularly effective when they promote gender equality and engage men, boys and the broader communities. In South Africa, for example, the evaluation findings of the Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE) demonstrated a 55 per cent reduction in intimate partner violence over a two-year period.<sup>18</sup>

48. Preventing violence against women requires tackling attitudes, behaviours and beliefs that lead to discrimination and stereotyped roles for women and men and condone or tolerate violence against women and girls; however, this remains a challenge (see [A/69/222](#)). Although some evidence suggests that violence against women is becoming less acceptable, many forms of violence against women, such as wife-beating, are still tolerated in many countries around the world.<sup>4</sup> This means that Member States, in collaboration with other actors, will need to continue working with a wide range of stakeholders, including men and boys, community and religious leaders, to promote gender equality and respectful relationships through awareness-raising, community mobilization and educational programmes.

49. Awareness-raising and social marketing campaigns on the causes and consequences of violence are important in enhancing awareness of women's and girls' rights, available remedies and services for survivors and in conveying the unacceptability of violence and discrimination against women and girls. Growing evidence shows, however, that such campaigns are not particularly effective if they are not complemented with other prevention strategies. Almost all reporting States referred to campaigns that raise awareness about such violence, often in connection with annual commemorations of international events. However, limited information was provided about their impact and whether they are held regularly, sustained and extended to remote areas.

50. The critical role of the media in raising awareness about violence against women and challenging gender stereotypes and social norms that perpetuate such

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<sup>17</sup> See L. Heise and A. Kotsadam, "Cross-national and multilevel correlates of partner violence: An analysis of data from population-based surveys", *The Lancet Global Health*, vol. 3, No. 6 (2015).

<sup>18</sup> See WHO and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, *Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Against Women: Taking action and generating evidence* (WHO, Geneva, 2010).

violence is also acknowledged in the agreed conclusions. In line with good practices in this area, Member States have worked with the media to develop tools that protect young people from forms of violence occurring through technology (Sweden) or promote non-gender-discriminatory messaging and gender-sensitive reporting of violence against women and girls, through the development of guidelines (the Philippines), regulatory frameworks (Italy) and the capacity-building of media and advertising professionals (Australia).

51. Community mobilization is another important intervention in challenging norms that perpetuate violence and discrimination against women and girls. As recent evidence shows, community mobilization to prevent HIV and violence against women in Uganda reduced actual rates of physical violence by men against their women partners by 52 per cent over the previous 12 months, following the programme intervention.<sup>19</sup> Engaging multiple stakeholders and challenging social norms that condone violence against women were the main strategies of the intervention.

52. Member States have made efforts to mobilize communities against violence against women and harmful practices by conducting sensitization activities in communities and schools, often with the engagement of traditional and religious leaders (Uganda). Particular efforts have been made to engage men and boys in community mobilization programmes, training and capacity-building activities (Namibia, Sweden and Uganda). Evidence shows that specific interventions, such as group education, that target men and boys together with women and girls are more effective when combined with community mobilization.<sup>20</sup>

53. Some promising practices to address norms and behaviours at the community level derive from programmes designed to discourage harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.<sup>21</sup> Apart from discouraging the practice, there is evidence that such programmes have had a positive impact on other forms of violence against women and girls.<sup>21</sup> The broader interlinkages among gender inequality, violence against women and harmful practices are also being considered through the involvement of UN-Women in the second phase of the UNICEF-UNFPA joint programme on female genital mutilation/cutting.

54. The educational system can contribute towards changing sociocultural attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate violence against women at early stages of children's lives. At the same time, women and girls often face violence within educational institutions. Holistic school-based programmes that include school reforms, reporting mechanisms, training of teachers and the sensitization of communities and parents have proved to be the most effective,<sup>22</sup> but they appear to be in place in only a few countries (Ecuador). In several countries, comprehensive sexuality education (Germany and the Philippines), specialized training for teachers

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<sup>19</sup> See Tanya Abramsky et al., "Findings from the SASA! Study", *BMC Medicine*, vol. 12 (2014), available from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1741-7015/12/122>.

<sup>20</sup> See Diana J. Arango et al., "Gender Equality and Development: Interventions to Prevent or Reduce Violence Against Women and Girls: A Systematic Review of Reviews", *Women's Voice and Agency Research Series*, No. 10 (2014).

<sup>21</sup> See UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, *The dynamics of social change: Towards the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting in five African countries* (UNICEF, Florence, Italy, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, endnote 35.

and general awareness-raising have been provided to sensitize teachers, students and their parents on violence against women and girls, respectful relationships, gender equality and human rights (Finland, Georgia, Hungary, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Italy). Other promising efforts aimed at eliminating harmful gender stereotypes include the development or revision of school curriculums (Cambodia and the Philippines) and the strengthening of responses to violence, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of such responses, within educational institutions (Kenya, the Philippines and Sweden).

55. Member States provided limited information on the allocation of resources to implement prevention interventions and their sustainability and impact. Regrettably, in most cases, efforts appear to be piecemeal rather than part of a long-term prevention strategy, which is less likely to be effective (see [E/CN.6/2015/3](#)).

### **Multisectoral services, programmes and responses**

56. In order to provide effective responses to the needs of victims/survivors, multisectoral services, programmes and responses should be comprehensive, coordinated and accessible. They must be adequately resourced, sustainable and supported by all available technologies, as highlighted in the agreed conclusions. The vast array of services and responses include those provided by the police and justice sector, health-care services, including those for sexual and reproductive health, and social services, including counselling, shelters, 24-hour hotlines and child services. The agreed conclusions also stress the need for such services to support women's long-term recovery and empowerment. Specific measures should be taken to coordinate services, including through referral processes (see [E/2013/27-E/CN.6/2013/11](#), para. 34 (ddd) and (eee)).

57. A significant part of this section of the agreed conclusions highlights the need to improve women's access to affordable health-care systems in order to address all the health consequences associated with violence against women and girls and the need to accelerate efforts to address the linkages between HIV and AIDS and such violence. In the conclusions, Member States are urged to expand health-care services and to strengthen maternal and reproductive health-care centres for women seeking protection from violence and assistance (see *ibid.*, para. 34 (hhh)-(III)).

58. Challenges in providing services for women and girls include their limited availability and scope, inconsistent coordination, insufficient police and justice responses, limited provision of long-term services for victims and inadequate quality of service provision (see [E/CN.6/2013/3](#), paras. 27, 28, 31 and 32).

59. Nearly all Member States have referred to the presence of a range of multisectoral services, including 24-hour hotlines, police responses and access to legal aid, judicial services, shelters, health care and psychosocial counselling, rape crisis centres and one-stop centres. In line with the agreed conclusions, Australia and the United States have referred to the use of technology to assist victims/survivors. Those efforts notwithstanding, access to services, and women's willingness to seek help, remain low. Based on available data, less than 40 per cent of women sought help from any source and of those, a mere 10 per cent sought help from the police (see *ibid.*, footnote 8).

60. In line with the measures outlined in the agreed conclusions, some States provide services for victims of trafficking (Albania, Austria, Belarus, Germany,

Italy, Latvia, the Philippines, Switzerland, Uruguay and the United States) or for women who have been displaced during crisis situations, such as natural disasters (the Philippines). The provision of long-term assistance for women and girls is imperative to ensure their full recovery and participation in society; however, this remains an ongoing challenge for nearly all Member States.

61. The coordination of services is critical to ensure immediate access to all necessary services in a streamlined manner and to reduce the risk of revictimization of the women experiencing violence. Effective coordination can be achieved through referral pathways and protocols and other agreements among services. The coordination of services in Member States continues to vary from coordination mechanisms, including specific task forces or working groups (Argentina, Belarus, Cambodia, Finland, Italy, Kenya, Mozambique, Paraguay and Uganda), to coordination processes, such as protocols, memorandums of understanding, referral pathways or case management conferences (Albania, Cambodia, Italy, Paraguay, Turkey and the State of Palestine). In some cases, services are delivered in an integrated and coordinated manner through coordination mechanisms or inter-agency agreements (Paraguay). Those efforts notwithstanding, there are still significant gaps and challenges in effective and consistent coordination among services.

62. For services to be fully effective, they must not only be coordinated but must be of good quality, which is important for building the confidence of women and girls in accessing and using the services. Good-quality services are those that are responsive to all women, including those who suffer multiple forms of discrimination, such as migrant and indigenous women and women from other marginalized communities (Australia, Colombia, Ecuador, the Philippines and the United States).

63. Guidelines, minimum standards or protocols based on good practices can ensure that the services provided are consistently of good quality. Some Member States use such practices to improve the quality of the services provided (Belarus, Cambodia, Ecuador, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Kenya, Sweden, Uganda and the United States). Other States have developed both referral guidelines and guidelines on the establishment of shelters, in line with international standards, in humanitarian settings (Uganda); guidelines for health-care and social service providers (Sweden); and protocols for professionals working in shelters (Hungary).

64. Services must provide gender-sensitive responses through qualified staff with the right attitudes, knowledge and skills to respond to women and girls. Furthermore, the capacity-building of service providers should be regularly updated and informed by the experiences of victims/survivors.

65. Training and capacity-building of service providers from different sectors remain a priority for many States (Colombia, Greece, Italy, the Philippines, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States); however, many Member States focus solely on the capacity-building of professionals from the justice sector (Austria, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Japan and Kenya). Regular or ongoing capacity-building remains a challenge, as does evaluating the impact of such training, given the persistent discriminatory attitudes of the police and justice sector.

66. Services must be available throughout the country; however, they are rarely provided outside of urban areas. Promising efforts to address that challenge include

the provision of services through mobile units in rural and remote areas (Uruguay). Furthermore, women need to be aware of the availability of such services and of their rights when accessing services. The provision of information for victims/survivors, including regarding investigation processes, legal and court procedures, access to support services, the rights of victims/survivors and access to compensation, is a good example of such awareness-raising (Austria, Belarus, Japan, Slovenia and Switzerland).

67. Since the adoption of the agreed conclusions, the United Nations system has done significant work to increase the quality of multisectoral services. For example, the Essential Services Package, which consists of guidelines for good-quality service provision in the areas of health, police and justice, and social services and for action on coordination and governance has been developed.<sup>23</sup> The package forms part of the Joint Global Programme for Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, a partnership of five United Nations entities, including UN-Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and UNODC, which is supported by the Governments of Australia and Spain.

68. The agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session of the Commission highlighted other measures to be taken by States to improve the provision of services, responses and programmes addressing violence against women and girls, including the development of perpetrator programmes aimed at changing men's violent behaviour (Albania, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Singapore and Slovenia) and strengthening gender-sensitive responses by law enforcement by increasing the number of women on police forces (India and Japan).

69. Some States have improved their health-care-related services, especially for maternal and sexual and reproductive health (Argentina, Ireland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mozambique, the Philippines and Uganda), while others have developed measures to address HIV (Argentina, Colombia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Philippines); only a few, however, have highlighted the linkages between HIV and women and girls experiencing violence (the United States). Other specific initiatives in line with the agreed conclusions that have been taken by States include specific responses to violence against girls in schools, mandatory reporting and increased penalties for teachers who abuse students (Ecuador, Kenya and Mozambique).

70. An important component of effectively coordinated multisectoral services and responses is the assessment of their effectiveness through ongoing monitoring and evaluation and ethical data collection processes. Despite the importance of monitoring and evaluation, only a few States have such processes in place. Good practices include the participation of civil society organizations and victims/survivors in the assessment of the quality of service provision (Ireland), as well as monitoring the extent of access to such services (the Philippines and the United Kingdom). The assessment of access to, and the quality of, multisectoral services, programmes and responses remains a critical gap, as does the allocation of sufficient resources for the provision of such services and the monitoring and evaluation of their effectiveness. Funding civil society organizations, which have a critical role and expertise in providing such services, needs to be increased, and their role needs to be acknowledged and further strengthened.

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<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/initiatives-articles/14-essential-services-package.html>.

**Improving the evidence**

71. The agreed conclusions include measures on research and analysis on the causes of violence against women and girls, data collection, effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and the sharing of best practices (see [E/2013/27-E/CN.6/2013/11](#), para. 34 (mmm)-(qqq)).

72. Prevalence data increase the understanding of the various types of violence and their consequences, identify groups at high risk and their particular conditions, explore the barriers to seeking help and ensure that the appropriate responses are being provided. As such, measuring violence against women is an increasing priority in the international agenda.

73. The inclusion of a target to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the private and public spheres (target 5.2) and a target to eliminate all harmful practices (target 5.3) in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires the collection of internationally consistent and comparable prevalence data. This will measure the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women and girls around the world. The indicators are yet to be agreed, but should build on the previous work of United Nations inter-governmental processes, such as the nine core indicators for measuring violence against women<sup>24</sup> and the minimum set of gender indicators.<sup>25</sup> The indicators for the global monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals will be approved by the Statistical Commission in March 2016; this will also contribute considerably to the monitoring of the accountability of States in addressing violence against women and girls.

74. Data on the prevalence of violence against women are currently available for 102 countries,<sup>4</sup> and a recent analysis highlights that more than 40 countries conducted at least two surveys in the period from 1995 to 2014.<sup>4</sup> Conducting such surveys regularly, with the same methodology, is good practice, as it allows for changes to be analysed over time<sup>4</sup> (Albania, Australia, Ecuador, Finland and the United States). There is still, however, a high proportion of countries that have limited or no data available, which presents a challenge to measuring changes over the life of the new sustainable development agenda.

75. The collection and management of administrative data are critical for strengthening the quality of service provision and informing relevant laws, policies and programmes. In collecting such data, it is good practice to gather both qualitative and quantitative data, including through the voices of victims/survivors. Data should be collected and shared in an ethical manner to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of victims/survivors, especially when services are coordinated. Information-sharing agreements and appropriate technological systems should be in place to reduce the risk of exposing unnecessary information and to reduce the need for the victim/survivor to reveal the details of her experience to several service providers.

76. The collection of administrative data should take place within all services, but many Member States often rely on data collected only by the police and the justice sector (Austria, Germany, Namibia and Slovenia). In line with measures outlined in the agreed conclusions, some States have improved the collection and recording of

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<sup>24</sup> See [E/CN.3/2011/5](#), available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc11/2011-5-FOC-GenderStats-E.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> See <http://genderstats.org/>.



administrative data within some or all services (India, Italy, Ireland, Paraguay and Uganda).

77. The collection and management of administrative data through electronic systems, which allows for immediate access to information and ensures its safety and protection, is an example of good practice (Albania, the Philippines and Uganda), as is the standardization of indicators for the collection of administrative data across a range of sectors (Paraguay).

78. Research and analysis on violence against women and girls improve the knowledge-base and understanding of the causes of violence, what can be done to mitigate its effects and how it might be prevented from reoccurring or happening in the first place. As such, many Member States have conducted research and studies on different aspects of gender inequality and violence against women, its causes and consequences, including its economic and social costs (Australia, Cambodia, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Djibouti, Finland, Ireland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Norway, Singapore, Switzerland and Uganda). Other good practices include the development of agencies dedicated to the research of violence against women (Australia).

### **III. Conclusions and recommendations**

79. **The agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women have further strengthened the normative framework on the elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls and have provided impetus for other intergovernmental processes to address this issue.**

80. **The fifty-seventh session increased the momentum for Member States and the United Nations entities to take action. Good practices and solutions in respect of strengthening legal, policy and accountability frameworks, awareness-raising, capacity-building, educational programmes, improving multisectoral services, collecting data, and research and analysis are increasingly available. There is now more experience to draw on in responding to specific forms of violence and the needs of particular groups of women and girls.**

81. **Better knowledge on how to develop the evidence-base on what works in relation to the prevention of violence is increasingly available. The important role of civil society organizations in the implementation of measures to prevent violence is crucial and requires recognition. There is a poor evidence-base on the support provided to civil society organizations and on the manner in which cooperation between governments and civil society takes place.**

82. **Coordination and collaboration among the entities of the United Nations system, in particular in the areas of prevention and the provision of quality services, has improved.**

83. **Despite the new normative advances of the agreed conclusions, only a few Member States have addressed the relevant issues, including the risks that information, communication and technology pose for women and girls and the protection of particular groups of women, including women human rights defenders.**

84. Notwithstanding the progress achieved, the prevalence of violence against women remains unacceptable and the implementation of global and national legal and policy frameworks has been slow and uneven. Remaining challenges include limited allocation of resources to implement laws, policies and programmes and insufficient monitoring and evaluation of their impact; the ad hoc approach taken in interventions to prevent violence against women; limited reliable data for monitoring progress; limited coordination among multiple stakeholders; underreporting of incidents; and the discriminatory attitudes of officials handling cases of victims/survivors and insufficient enforcement of legislation.

85. In order to accelerate the implementation of the agreed conclusions and the broader normative framework on violence against women and girls, Member States should continue to address gender inequality and discrimination as root causes of violence against women and strengthen the role of national gender equality mechanisms to that end.

86. Member States should, with a sense of urgency, also build on and implement existing commitments, including those made by Heads of States at the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action.

87. Member States should adopt a comprehensive approach to the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls and ensure coordination among different governmental sectors in the areas of justice, finance and social protection in that regard. They should also adopt targeted measures to address the needs of particular groups of women and girls and undertake adequate monitoring and evaluation of the impact of all measures taken.

88. Financial investments by all Member States must be significantly increased to improve the provision of multisectoral services, strengthen the responses of the justice sector and enhance measures to ensure the prosecution of perpetrators, the protection of victims/survivors and the prevention of violence against women and girls.

89. Laws and policies must be comprehensive and fully implemented, and discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours must be changed to ensure that violence and discrimination are never condoned, tolerated or perpetuated. Services must be consistent in scope and quality, with long-term support provided, and data must be collected in line with international standards so that they are comparable and consistent, including in accordance with the indicators for measuring progress in the implementation of the new sustainable development agenda.

90. Member States should further ensure that the tailoring of the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to national circumstances is guided by the aspirational global targets and in accordance with international human rights standards and obligations.

91. In order to transform commitments made at the Commission into action, Member States should collaborate with civil society, review the impact of measures and share progress, gaps and good practices to inform ongoing deliberations and outcomes of the Commission.

**92. The United Nations system should support Member States to accelerate the implementation of the agreed conclusions and to ensure that national action complies with international norms and standards.**

**93. States should implement all the agreed conclusions by accelerating progress as a matter of urgency, including through the replication of successful interventions at the global level, and ensuring a comprehensive approach to the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls. Member States should also strengthen processes to assess the impact of a comprehensive approach in order to accelerate progress at the national level in meeting targets 5.2 and 5.3 of the new sustainable development agenda.**

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