

Interactive Dialogue: Accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action – the role of CSW

Speaking on behalf of the **Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights**, member of the **European Women's Lobby**, the largest umbrella of women's civil society organisations in the European Union representing over 2000 women's organisations.

The CSW is the most unique multilateral gathering in the world dedicated to women's rights and to achieving gender equality.

The role of civil society organisations as independent critical voices is vital for healthy, democratic societies.

However, we are witnessing a shrinking space for civil society. This is apparent in the weakening of institutional mechanisms along with, in some instances, the absence of such mechanisms, which impede upon the effective monitoring, follow-up, review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Therefore, we call on all States to (re)establish, strengthen and resource national mechanisms for gender equality, this includes sustainable funding for women's civil society organisations.

We call on the European Union (EU) to establish a stand-alone Council formation on Gender Equality. This would facilitate gender mainstreaming across all EU Council formations (from agriculture to finance) and, in so doing enable monitoring of and accountability for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at European level. It would also facilitate follow-up to and accountability of the Agreed Conclusions that have been adopted in the three decades since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995.

We are also witnessing the shrinking space in the participation of civil society at the CSW. Yet, the Beijing Platform for Action recognises the indispensable role that civil society plays in accelerating change to achieve gender equality.

Over the years, access to negotiating rooms and other spaces has been curtailed. Accessibility, particularly for women with disabilities, is also compromised.

At the CSW, there is a perceived growing drift between governmental and non-governmental participants, to the extent that civil society questions whether we have become mere spectators.

Women's civil society brings real life voices and experiences to the negotiation tables, as well as good practices and agreed language.

Therefore, we call on all States to:

- Include women's civil society in their national delegations and that this becomes a requirement of the annual CSW gatherings.
- Carry out peer reviews on the implementation, follow-up and accountability of the Agreed Conclusions.

- Facilitate women's civil society organisations in providing shadow reports.

Finally, we fully endorse multilateralism and give our full support to UN Women as the Guardians of the Beijing Platform for Action.

We also support NGO CSW and call for the strengthening of the regional caucuses to enable meaningful participation of civil society at the CSW in the future.

Thank you.