

UNGA 74

Joint statement at the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

Mr President,

It is my pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of Austria, Botswana, Finland, Kazakhstan, Panama, my own country, Belgium, as well as on behalf of Albania, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bahamas, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay and Zambia, as we celebrate this year the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the 20th anniversary of the adoption of its Optional Protocol.

In the past 40 years, the Convention has brought about important changes for women and girls worldwide. Constitutional, legislative and administrative reforms were adopted to prohibit discrimination as well as to prevent and address gender-based violence against women. Gender equality policies including in the areas of education, health and the socio-economic

empowerment of women were strengthened. The contribution of the Committee's General Recommendations in these regards has been important.

Unfortunately, no country in the world has yet successfully eliminated discrimination against women and girls, or achieved full gender equality. Discrimination continues to persist in all areas of life and transcends national, cultural and religious boundaries, often fueled by patriarchal stereotypes and power imbalances. Meanwhile, new challenges to gender equality emerge in relation to technological development, violent extremism, environmental degradation, climate change, racial discrimination and other societal changes.

We hereby reaffirm here our strong commitment to the Convention. No law, no tradition, no religion, nor any custom or culture can ever justify discrimination against women and girls. Considering the deeply entrenched social and cultural norms that uphold and reinforce gender stereotypes and perpetuate discriminations against women, it is of crucial importance to adhere to international and regional law and standards, in particular CEDAW, and implement these in practice.

Today, 189 States have ratified the Convention, which can be considered a success. However, we should not be complacent. We should work towards universal ratification and the complete withdrawal of all substantive reservations that were entered to the Convention, in particular to its articles 2 and 16, in order to ensure the elimination of all forms of discrimination, including in the sphere of work, home and family. We therefore encourage the concerned States parties to review constantly their reservations and consider their removal.

Once ratified, the effective implementation of the Convention is essential. Part of the implementation is to submit periodic reports to the CEDAW-Committee. We call upon States Parties to submit their periodic reports in a timely manner.

We also invite those States that have not yet ratified the Convention and/or the Optional Protocol thereto, to consider doing so, as these instruments provide for essential guarantees and strengthen remedies for women and girls.

Mr President,

To seize the occasion of the 40th anniversary of CEDAW we must step up our efforts and do more to eradicate discrimination against women and girls, including through bridging gender gaps and structural barriers in order to achieve full gender equality.

Thank you.