30 Years in Review of the Beijing Platform for Action

Position paper
of
the EDVAW Platform
on the urgent need to address violence and discrimination against women and girls in the context of rising gender equality regression

I. Introduction

a. Work and mandate of the EDVAW Platform

At the time that the Beijing Platform for Action was created, only two UN and one regional independent expert monitoring mechanisms on women's human rights were in place.[1] Today, the EDVAW Platform[2] represents multiple global and regional independent expert mechanisms that monitor the implementation of legislative frameworks that address structural and

[1] The following conventions laid the foundation for the mechanisms mentioned above: The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, adopted in 1979 as a legally binding instrument) and the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW, of 1993) provided a global legal gender framework that was used for and is reflected in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. At the regional level, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) had been adopted in 1994.

[2] There are seven UN and regional independent women's human rights expert mechanisms mandated to address gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls, each one working diligently to monitor the implementation of human rights standards aimed at advancing women and girls' rights at the international and regional levels. These seven mechanisms are: The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa (**ASRWHR**); The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women **(CEDAW);** The Council of Europe´s Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (**GREVIO**); The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Rapporteur on the Rights of Women (**IAHRWR**); The Committee of Experts (CEVI) of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (**MESECVI**); The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls (**SR VAWG**); The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (**WGDAWG**).

interpersonal violence and discrimination against women. These mechanisms have played a pivotal role in ensuring state accountability of their international obligations, advocating for the implementation of progressive laws and policies, and bringing attention to both systemic and emerging issues affecting women and girls worldwide. Through coordinated efforts and strategic partnerships, they have successfully pushed for the adoption of stronger legal frameworks backed by feminist and inclusive approaches to gender equality and women's rights, influenced global and regional agendas, and elevated the voices of women from marginalized communities.

The collaborative work of these expert mechanisms has led to concrete improvements in areas such as legislative reforms, increased awareness, and more robust monitoring and reporting systems, as well as making these mechanisms more visible and accessible to all. The Platform has allowed members to strategically share promising practices and experiences among each other, and to highlight emerging trends in the field of women's rights, contributing to the broader global movement towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Together, their work offers a comprehensive perspective on the measures taken for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

b. Position of the EDVAW Platform on Beijing +30

Adopted by consensus at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA) presents a comprehensive and forward-looking strategy to achieve gender equality, empower women, and protect the human rights of women and girls. While not legally binding, the Declaration carries significant moral and political weight, encouraging countries to implement its recommendations through national policies and legislation. It remains to date the most progressive comprehensive policy framework for advancing gender equality. It calls for the removal of systemic and structural barriers that prevent women and girls from fully enjoying their human rights, across social, economic, political, and environmental domains. The declaration emphasizes the need for comprehensive interconnected policy measures to realize this vision.

The EDVAW platform members support the understanding of the BDPA that violence against women is a manifestation of "historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and prevented

women's full advancement". We further call on , governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, and other stakeholders, to follow the multiple clear actions the BDPA has called for in order to remove systemic violence and discrimination against women and girls.

In advance of the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), this paper sets out the position, observations, and recommendations of the EDVAW Platform on the eradication of gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls. The position paper complements and aims to offer further insight into the upcoming Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), whose sixty-ninth session will concentrate on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Due to the Platform's specific mandate on ending violence and discrimination against women and girls, it aims to contribute to the analysis and reporting for Beijing +30 by:

- Analysing the progress made over the past 30 years in addressing gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls, with a specific focus on the effects of structural violence and discrimination on women and girls, particularly the way in which intersecting forms of violence and discrimination affect those most marginalized women and girls.
- Highlighting the backlash, regression, and challenges in gender equality and women's rights that the EDVAW mechanisms have identified in their respective mandates and collectively, and its impact on efforts to combat gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls.
- Reasserting the actionable recommendations that the BDPA made to States, civil society, and international organizations with a view to reinvigorate efforts towards achieving the goals set out in the Beijing Platform for Action and eradicating gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls.

II. Progress in Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls

Over the past three decades, substantial progress has been made in the global effort to eradicate sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls. Countries worldwide have increasingly recognized the critical importance of addressing these issues, leading to the adoption of comprehensive laws, policies, and international conventions aimed at protecting women's and girl's rights. Public awareness campaigns, education initiatives, and grassroots movements have significantly shifted societal attitudes, reduced stigma and encouraged survivors of discrimination and violence to seek accountability and justice. Additionally, the establishment of dedicated institutions and mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing gender equality and gender responsive measures has strengthened accountability and provided women with greater access to legal recourse and support services.

While challenges remain, the collective efforts of governments, civil society, and international organizations have brought about advances in combating gender-based violence and discrimination in some areas. Many states have prioritized the introduction and implementation of stronger legislation with a view to ensuring equal participation of women in private, public and political life, which include, in particular: a) advancing the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions; b) enhancing women's rights in the workplace; c) putting in place gender-equal economic and social policies; d) ensuring women's equality in the family and empowerment; f) ensuring therein effective access to sexual and reproductive health rights; g) ending and responding to violence against women, including femicide, rape, sexual harassment and h) strengthening the support protection and assistance services for survivors of discrimination and violence

The global progress on the BDPA, now 30 years on, reveals both achievements and persistent challenges, especially concerning structural forms of violence and discrimination against women.

These persistent forms of structural gender-based violence and discrimination, rooted in systemic inequalities and discriminatory norms, remain a key barrier to true gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls everywhere.

III. Global regression in gender equality

During the 25th anniversary of the BDPA, governments adopted a political declaration that recognised that "no country has fully achieved gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls, and that overall, progress has not been fast or deep enough." The declaration went on to call for the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence and harmful practices against all women and girls, as well as the elimination of structural barriers and discriminatory social norms that lead to structural violence. This time was marked by a rise in movements speaking up against gender-based violence and discrimination against women (#NiUnaMenos, #MeToo). However, 5 years later, progress remains agonizingly slow. Structural violence and discrimination continue to occur through economic, political, or cultural -based processes – often on intersecting grounds – and working together to prevent women and girls from achieving their full quality of life. This is exacerbated for women who experience intersecting forms of discrimination and violence on the basis of their sex/gender, gender identity, , sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, indigenous status, age, religion, political opinion, or other grounds.

a. Backlash against gender equality and women's rights

Much of the Beijing +25 reporting alerted about the ongoing and further potential for backsliding due to the persistence of deep-rooted attitudes as well as structural and attitudinal barriers that sustain inequality and regressions in gender equality. The EDVAW Platform's own Beijing +25 review warned of mounting opposition to and backsliding of women's rights everywhere, including an upsurge in retrogressive movements and a backlash against feminism, gender equality and women's empowerment. Unfortunately, in the last five years, this trend has not only continued but intensified. Violence against women and girls persists as a silent and endemic crisis. There are still major obstacles that prevent laws from being implemented and enforced. These include a lack of funding, institutional barriers, patriarchal structures, growing militarization, and gender stereotypes that are pervasive in institutions of justice, security, and law enforcement. Meanwhile, there is a growing opposition to and backsliding of established rights of women and girls across the globe. In numerous countries, laws addressing gender-based violence against women are either non-existent, insufficient, or poorly enforced, and women who defy gender stereotypes and norms are targeted. Hard-won fundamental rights such as the access of women and girls to education, their participation in

public life, as well as their right to access education; protection from child and forced marriage or female genital mutilation (FGM) are being questioned. Recent years have also witnessed a troubling trend of downgrading or eliminating dedicated Women/Gender Equality or Affairs ministries, or reducing funding to them; leading to diminished resources for gender equality initiatives; hindering the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies, leaving gaps in funding and accountability.

b. Endemic levels of gender-based violence and violence against women and girls

In 2013, The UN General Assembly passed resolution 68/191 asking countries to enact strict laws against gender-based violence against women and girls. However, recent data found that in 2022, around 48,800 women and girls worldwide were subjected to femicide, perpetrated by their intimate partners or other family members. This means that, on average, more than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their own family. Estimates published by World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that about 30% of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Worryingly, disaggregated data and reporting of violence against women remains low, as does their access to justice. There is also a lack of effective response by justice professionals. Access to justice remains a critical challenge for women, with many facing systemic barriers, such as gender bias within judicial systems, lack of legal aid, and underreporting due to stigma or fear of retaliation. Impunity for gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue, sustained by inadequate laws, societal normalization of violence, and insufficient training for law enforcement and judiciary personnel. Furthermore, what is infinitely harder to measure are the uncountable deaths and harm caused by inadequate support systems and structural discrimination, in other words, deaths and harm caused by structural violence. Moreover, armed conflicts also exacerbate the vulnerabilities of women and girls, exposing them to heightened risks of sexual violence, forced displacement, and exploitation.

Although international legal frameworks, including UNSCR1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, emphasize the need for women's participation in peacebuilding processes and the protection of their rights during and after conflict, the implementation of this resolution remains inconsistent. Additionally, there are numerous essential terminology of gender-based discrimination under international law, including through misconstruing the term *gender*,

despite key definitions and interpretations provided in UN documents (including the International Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and CEDAW's General Recommendations, particularly No. 28 and No. 35.

IV. Legal and Policy Frameworks

a. Progress

Over 100 countries have enacted comprehensive laws to address domestic violence. In nations with such laws, intimate partner violence rates are generally lower (e.g., 9.5% compared to 16.1% in countries without such legislation). Budget allocations for programs tackling violence against women have also increased in about 78% of countries. Civil society organizations, youth, and women's movements have been critical in driving awareness and legal reforms[3].

b. Persistent challenges

Despite new laws, enforcement is inconsistent. Discriminatory norms and impunity persist, with low conviction rates for sexual and gender-based violence crimes. The world has also witnessed new and emerging forms of violence such as technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, which acts as a medium, cause and consequence of gender-based violence.

Moreover, structural gender inequalities and stereotypes, including restricted economic opportunities and limited representation in leadership, continue to perpetuate violence. Women from minority groups or otherwise marginalized groups face compounded risks due to intersectional vulnerabilities, such as xenophobia, racial discrimination, and exclusion from decision-making processes. Women living in poverty also face aggravated vulnerabilities that increase their exposure to violence and limit their access to justice, healthcare, and education. Poverty intensifies the risk of exploitation of women and girls, including trafficking and forced labour.

[3] See UN Women, 2023. https://eca.unwomen.org/en/stories/explainer/2023/12/facts-and-figures-ending-violence-against-women?utm

Overall, all issues of gender-based violence and discrimination are being exacerbated by the growing backlash and regression against gender equality, which threatens to roll back decades of progress and reassert stereotypical gender roles. This alarming trend is evident in various parts of the world, enabled by conservative forces, harmful societal norms, austerity measures, increased polarization and the multiplication of global crises (conflict, humanitarian emergencies, COVID-19 and climate change). These developments are often accompanied by rhetoric that seeks to roll back advances in gender equality and diminish the legitimacy of international and regional human rights standards. Additionally, there has been a resurgence of efforts to delegitimize feminist and human rights-centred activism, with attacks on women's rights defenders and civil society organizations, becoming increasingly common. This backlash is not only stalling progress but actively reversing it, exacerbating gender inequalities and reinforcing harmful stereotypes.

The EDVAW Platform stresses the urgency of addressing this regression, calling for renewed commitment and vigilance to safeguard the gains made in the fight for gender equality and to resist any attempts to erode the rights of women and girls and marginalized communities. Furthermore, lack of inclusion in political decision-making and societal leadership fuels the myriads of other human rights violations that women face daily, including acts of discrimination against women in the areas of work, education, marriage and property rights, as well as the denial of sexual and reproductive services and rights, including safe and legal abortion.

The Platform continues to highlight that practices such as human trafficking for sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, child and forced marriage, and bride kidnapping, are all forms of gender-based violence that are exacerbated by persistent discriminatory gender stereotypes, that prevent women from fully exercising their autonomy and enjoying their equal rights and dignity as human beings.

c. Regression on sexual and reproductive health rights

The Platform is particularly alarmed by the regression in women's reproductive and health rights. The Beijing Platform for Action directly calls for the elimination of non-consensual medical procedures, such as forced sterilisation and forced pregnancies. Nevertheless, the EDVAW Platform mechanisms have observed a troubling increase in medical interventions

during childbirth, even in uncomplicated and natural births, along with widespread reports of abusive and disrespectful practices towards women during childbirth globally. The protection from obstetric violence, the concept recognized in Latin American childbirth activism, may serve as an effective tool for addressing structural violence in maternity care, including excessive intervention rates, non-consensual care, practices of conscientious objection that hinder women's and girls' access to safe abortion, denial of painless childbirth, disrespect, and other abusive practices.

d. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence

Furthermore, the Platform is highly alarmed at the increase in technology-facilitated violence, and what this means for pre-existing power hierarchies. The Platform released its first thematic paper on the digital dimension of violence against women in 2022, with many of the mechanisms also publishing individual studies and policies on the topic. The Platform is highly concerned with the emerging new digital dimension of violence against women and girls. A standard definition of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls is lacking, which contributes to a global dearth of comparable statistics. However, the data that has been gathered at the national and local levels supports high prevalence rates. The rapid expansion of digital spaces has not only mirrored but, in many cases, amplified the structural inequalities and patriarchal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. Online harassment, cyberstalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and other forms of digital abuse have become pervasive, disproportionately targeting women and girls on intersecting grounds. This digital violence reinforces existing power imbalances and undermines women and girls participation in society. Digital platforms also fuel misogynistic and sexist attacks making it more difficult for victims to access justice and reparations and exacerbating their social and economic vulnerabilities. The Platform urges a comprehensive and coordinated response to this threat, emphasizing the need for stronger mandatory regulatory frameworks, increased digital literacy, and the development of effective mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable in the virtual realm. Thus, without concerted action, the unchecked rise of technology-facilitated violence threatens to undermine the progress made in advancing gender equality and could entrench the very hierarchies that the Beijing Platform for Action seeks to dismantle.

e. Lack of sufficient gender-responsive economic policies

Several structural inequalities disproportionately affect women and girls, particularly in the context of debt and financial systems. These inequalities manifest in various forms, including the gendered burden of household debt, where women often manage limited resources in financially strained environments, but lack control over significant economic decisions. Women are more likely to be employed in informal sectors, earning lower wages and lacking access to social security benefits, which exacerbates their economic vulnerability. Additionally, cultural norms and practices, such as dowry systems and child marriages, further entrench gender disparities by prioritizing boys' education and healthcare over those of girls. At the national level, austerity measures and debt servicing often lead to cuts in public spending on education, healthcare, and social services, which disproportionately affect women and girls. These structural barriers perpetuate cycles of poverty and limit women's economic and social opportunities.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, calls for the integration of gender perspectives into macroeconomic policies, including debt management. It emphasizes the need to ensure that women have equal access to economic resources and decision-making processes, particularly in contexts of financial crisis and debt restructuring. The declaration underscores the importance of addressing the specific needs of women in economic policies and highlights the need for gender-sensitive approaches in debt relief and restructuring programs. By advocating for the inclusion of women in economic decision-making and prioritizing their access to resources, the Beijing Declaration provides a framework for addressing the structural inequalities that perpetuate gender disparities in the context of debt and financial systems.

f. Inadequate gender-responsive budgeting

The BDPA also strongly advocated for gender-responsive budgeting and mainstreaming into national policies, including economic. Today, an aspect of the regression we are witnessing is the allocation of no or insufficient resources to tackle gender equality and women’s empowerment and prevent discrimination and violence. Such efforts have been further worsened by the move of governments to convert programs and policies into gender-neutral

ones. Such an approach fails to recognize and address the distinct challenges faced by women and girls, effectively erasing their experiences and needs from the policy agenda.

V. The EDVAW Platform Members mandates and engagement with BDPA issues

Each independent expert mechanism has made great strides in supporting the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the last few years:

a. ASRWHR: The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission) is Africa's premier human rights body entrusted with safeguarding and advocating for human rights across the continent. Uniquely positioned within the African Human Rights System, the Commission is the sole AU Organ to have established Special Mechanisms dedicated to addressing specific thematic concerns critical to its mission. This strategic approach is an invaluable operational tool, enhancing the Commission's grasp of human rights issues throughout Africa.

Within these mechanisms, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa (SRRWA) holds a prominent role among the 13 mechanisms of the Commission. Since its inception in 1999, the SRRWA has been pivotal in advancing the rights of women and girls across the continent. Acknowledging that women's rights are fundamental to fulfilling its mandate, the Commission integrates women's rights across all its mechanisms.

Notably, through the SRRWA, the Commission played a key role in adopting the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). The Protocol protects rights which mirror the **12 critical areas of concern** identified in the BDPA, such as poverty, education, health, violence againt women, equal representation in decision-making, women and armed conflict, environment and sustainable development adequate budgetary allocation. Both frameworks play crucial roles in advancing gender equality, but the Maputo Protocol provides stronger legal protection for the areas idenfied in the BDPA.

The SRRWA mandate has been instrumental in driving progress in women's rights across the continent. Presently, 45 Member States have ratified the Protocol, with 21 States submitting

reports under its provisions. The Commission's adoption of Soft Laws, such as General Comments and Guidelines related to the Maputo Protocol, has significantly impacted the implementation and enforcement of the Protocol.

These Soft Laws include:

- **General Comment No.1 on Article 14 (1) (d) and (e) ofthe Maputo Protocol**, which emphasizes the interdependence and indivisible nature of human rights.
- **General Comment No. 2 on Article 14 (1) (a), (b), (c) and (f) and Article 14 (2) (a) and (c) of the Maputo Protocol**. This General Comment was adopted by the Commission to provide clarification and guidance on the provisions of the Protocol that guarantee women's reproductive and health rights.
- **Joint General Comment of the African Commission and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) on ending child marriage**. This particular General Comment was the first collaboration with the ACERWC to guide the relevant normative framework relevant to both our mandates, i.e., "ending Child marriage.". Utilizing this General Comment will effectively enhance the fight against forced and child marriages, contributing to the continental effort to eliminate child marriages.
- **General Comment No.6 on Article 7(d) of the Maputo Protocol on the Right to Property during Separation, Divorce, or Annulment of Marriage**. This is a landmark instrument, as it recognizes and elaborates on unpaid care work arising from the heavy burden of domestic work and care that women conduct daily, which is rarely recognized as work.
- **Joint General Comment of the Commission and the ACERWC on Female Genital Mutilation.** It emphasizes the necessity of comprehensive strategies encompassing legal frameworks, education, awareness-raising, and access to healthcare services to combat FGM and support survivors effectively.
- **Guidelines on Combating Sexual Violence and its Consequences in Africa, also known as the Niamey Guidelines.** The adoption of the Niamey Guidelines, which consist of a comprehensive definition of sexual violence that encompasses sexual harassment, sexual assault, forced marriage, forced pregnancy, FGM, anal or virginity tests, forced sterilization, forced prostitution, forced nudity and trafficking, is an essential step towards combating all forms of sexual violence against women. The

Commission appreciates the recent adoption of the **AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (CEVAWG)** at the Policy Organs Meetings held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February 2025. It also acknowledges the crucial role of the Commission as the leading institution for overseeing the implementation of all human rights instruments and holding Member States accountable through mechanisms such as the State Reporting process and other relevant tools. This new mandate falls within the responsibilities of the SRRWA, further enhancing its scope of work.

With the existence of this progressive legal framework, the mechanism of the SRRWA continues to draw the attention of state parties to the main challenge relating to the slow rate of domestication and implementation. As we celebrate 20 years of the Maputo Protocol and 30 years of the BDPA, we call on member states to fully align their laws and policies with these landmark and transformative instruments and to ensure their effective implementation. The SRRWA remains at the forefront to help states to adopt laws and policies for the effective implementation of the Maputo Protocol and for the entry into force of the newly adopted AU Convention on EVAWG. To further guide and provide support to member states, the SRRWA is working, in collaboration with its partners, to formulate and adopt, a Model Law to facilitate the implementation of the Maputo Protocol; and guidelines and strategy for lifting reservation on vital provisions of the Protocol.

b. CEDAW: The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the body of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The CEDAW Committee consists of 23 experts on women's rights from around the world. The CEDAW treaty is the legally binding International instrument dedicated to advancing women's and girls' rights. With a near universal ratification and despite many reservations, it brings about change in the daily life of women and girls around the world. The Committee's work is undertaken through the consideration of States parties' reports, conducting constructive dialogue with governments, adoption of concluding observations and recommendations, and the monitoring of the implementation of the concluding observations and recommendations through the follow-up procedure. In countries that have ratified the treaty, CEDAW has proved invaluable in opposing the effects of discrimination, which include violence, poverty, and lack of legal protections,

along with the denial of inheritance, property rights, and access to credit. The Committee elaborates and adopts general recommendations on specific articles of the Convention, themes or issues based on the examination of reports and information received from States parties.

All areas of the BDPA are addressed by the work of CEDAW. Since the entry into force of the Convention and the establishment of the Committee, CEDAW has reviewed hundreds of State party reports. The Committee plays a critical role in monitoring countries' implementation of the BDPA's objectives through its **review process of States parties' reports**. These reports provide an opportunity to assess whether governments are meeting their obligations under the CEDAW Convention, which directly aligns with the BDPA's strategic objectives. In the **Concluding Observations**, the CEDAW Committee highlights gaps or progress in areas such as education, health, violence against women, and political participation, which are also key areas under the BDPA. For instance, the Committee's recommendations often emphasize areas such as reducing violence against women or increasing female participation in politics, aligning with BDPA's emphasis on eliminating violence and achieving greater women's political representation.

The CEDAW Committee, through its country reviews and reports, often highlights thematic areas that overlap with the **12 critical areas of concern** identified in the BDPA, such as poverty, education, health, violence, and equal representation in decision-making. Furthermore, as of October 2024, the Committee has adopted **40** General Recommendations, interpreting the nature and scope of States parties' obligations under the Convention. These recommendations often address issues highlighted by the BDPA and provide detailed frameworks for achieving its goals. For instance, in the years since Beijing +25, the Committee has adopted General Recommendations No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration and No. 39 (2022) on indigenous women and girls. Furthermore, under the **Optional Protocol to CEDAW**, the Committee has the competence to intervene through two fundamental procedures for the protection of the rights of women under the Convention, subject to ratification and acceptance by State parties. The Committee is pleased to have observed increased recognition of and compliance by States parties with the OP-CEDAW, as well as its views and recommendations in recent years. This mechanism strengthens the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by holding governments accountable when they fail to protect women's rights.

CEDAW continues to be the most widely ratified fundamental human rights treaty that addresses the rights of women and the responsibilities of states towards ensuring them, including their right to be free from violence. It rightly stresses that discrimination against women can be multi-layered due to their experience of multiple forms of discrimination based on race, migration status, disability, and other factors. CEDAW has proven to be resilient and relevant to the fight to end violence against women, including addressing sexual and gender-based violence during times of conflict.

c. GREVIO: The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

Since the entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2014, which led to the setting-up of a two-tiered monitoring mechanism, GREVIO has been monitoring compliance with the Istanbul Convention's standards at the national level. Its reports and conclusions are followed up by recommendations issued by the Committee of the Parties, the second pillar of the Istanbul Convention's monitoring mechanism.

Through its baseline evaluation procedure, GREVIO has offered a comprehensive assessment of the level of implementation in respect of 35 of the 39 parties to date. The tailor-made findings addressing the country-specific context of each party to the Istanbul Convention have exposed far-reaching progress in several areas, notably the criminalisation of different forms of violence against women and girls, in particular the move towards a consent-based understanding of rape and sexual violence in criminal law, the expansion of the range of available support services for women victims of violence, the adoption of new measures prohibiting perpetrators from approaching victims, the introduction of specialist law enforcement units, prosecutors, and judges to investigate and prosecute cases of domestic violence and rape, improved data collection and evidence-based policy-making through comprehensive national action plans or strategies to prevent and combat violence against women. Based on a process of constructive dialogue with government representatives, relevant professionals and practitioners as well as civil society, in particular the women's rights movement, the results of the evaluation procedures are central to guiding governments in building effective measures to respond to violence against women.

Following up on the progress made, in 2023 GREVIO launched its first thematic evaluation procedure focusing on the theme of "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice." In this round, it focusses closely on the advancements made in implementation of the convention's provisions in relation to the four pillars in as far as they contribute to instilling a sense of trust and protection in victims: prevention, protection, prosecution and comprehensive policies. The findings made in each of its reports, baseline and thematic, are firmly rooted in the linkages made by the Istanbul Convention between the need to achieve greater equality between women and men in order to eliminate violence against women. Proposals for further action made by GREVIO to Parties to the convention thereby directly contribute to achieving the aims set out in the Beijing Platform for Action. They echo and reinforce the premise that underpins international norms and standards that seek to eliminate discrimination and violence against women.

Moreover, GREVIO also points to emerging trends in the wider field of violence against women, thereby providing further reflections on emerging issues that advance the protection of women from violence or that, conversely, jeopardise the progress made. As an example, with its General Recommendation No.1 on the digital dimension of violence against women, GREVIO offered an interpretation of the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, viewed through the prism of digital manifestations of violence against women, resulting in important policy recommendations for governments and other stakeholders in the form of its General Recommendation No.1 on the digital dimension of violence against women.

d. IAHWR: The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Rapporteur on the Rights of Women

Since its establishment in 1994, the Rapporteur on the Rights of Women of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has been committed to promoting the observance and defense of women's rights across the 35 Member States of the Organization of American States. This objective is achieved through continuous monitoring, the publication of specialized studies, support in the formulation of new jurisprudence within the petition and case system, and efforts to raise public awareness regarding women's rights and the corresponding States' obligations, all by the American Convention on Human Rights and the Convention of Belém do Pará.

In this context, the Rapporteur has addressed various issues regarding women's rights in the region, which overlap with the twelve critical areas of concern identified in the BDPA. In principle, each year, the IACHR publishes evaluations of the progress and setbacks observed in the normative, institutional, and public policy frameworks for the protection and guarantee of women's rights in the Americas and the Caribbean, especially the right to live a life free of violence and discrimination. In recent years, the Rapporteur has paid special attention to the regressive agenda that questions women's rights and jeopardizes the progress achieved, especially in sexual and reproductive rights.

In addition, the Rapporteur has carried out numerous studies and public pronouncements on the gender gaps that impede the exercise of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights under conditions of equality; the differentiated impact of climate change on women and girls; and the discrimination and violence against women in decision-making spaces. It has also promoted the development of inter-American standards on sexual and reproductive rights, in particular, the right to access reproductive and maternal health information and services, free from all forms of violence and discrimination, and the right of girls and adolescents to comprehensive, non-discriminatory, evidence-based sexual and reproductive education.

The IACHR, through its Rapporteur, has played a key role in the development of pioneering inter-American standards on the duty to prevent gender-based violence and women's right to justice and reparation. In the emblematic case of Maria Da Penha v. Brazil (2001), the IACHR found a discriminatory pattern of tolerance for domestic violence against women in Brazil, given the ineffectiveness of the judiciary in prosecuting and punishing those responsible. In Jessica Lenahan v. United States (2011), the IACHR reiterated the obligation of due diligence to prevent and protect victims from acts of violence committed by private individuals. Similarly, in the case of Yoani María Sánchez Cordero v. Cuba (2021), it concluded that the obligations established in the ADHR include the duty to respect, prevent, and eradicate violence against women as a crucial component of the State's duty to eliminate direct and indirect forms of discrimination. These examples of jurisprudence, like those from the universal and other regional systems, provide an important basis for the response to policy regressions.In addition, within the framework of the Inter-American Court’s jurisdiction, the IACHR has contributed to defining the scope of the obligations established in Article 7 of the Convention of Belém Do Pará and developing inter-American standards on women's rights. Thus, among the topics addressed are: i) torture, sexual and gender-based violence committed

in contexts of armed conflict and/or systematic patterns of human rights violations; ii) differentiated impacts and risks of violence given the intersection of additional factors of vulnerability, such as ethnic-racial origin, gender identity, poverty, status as a human rights defender or journalist; iii) scope of the duty of due diligence in response to reports of women's disappearances; (iv) enhanced duties of due diligence and special protection of girls and adolescents from violence, particularly sexual violence committed by family members and in educational settings; (v) discriminatory practices in access to justice and structural patterns of impunity; (vi) obstetric violence and forced sterilization as forms of violence against women prohibited by the Convention; (vii) sexual violence as a form of torture, even if committed by non-State actors; viii) scope of the duty of due diligence in relation to the statute of limitations and the rules of parliamentary immunity in cases of violence against women; and (ix) scope of due process guarantees in the face of the influence of gender stereotypes.

e. MESECVI: The Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention

Over the past 30 years, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém do Pará Convention) have served as fundamental instruments for advancing women's rights, gender equality, and the eradication of violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean. The convergence of international and regional commitments established by these frameworks has been instrumental in driving legal and policy reforms, fostering institutional mechanisms, and improving the lives of women and girls across the region.

In this context, MESECVI (the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention) was established 20 years ago to monitor and support States Parties in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention. By providing technical assistance, issuing recommendations, and facilitating regional cooperation, MESECVI has played a pivotal role in translating the commitments of both the Belém do Pará Convention and the Beijing Platform into concrete action.

Through periodic evaluations and a regional system of gender-based violence indicators, MESECVI has helped States assess their progress and identify areas for improvement. This monitoring process has not only reinforced accountability but has also guided the development

of more than 180 national laws addressing gender-based violence, including over 70 laws incorporating differentiated approaches for women in vulnerable situations.

Regarding femicidal violence, 50 laws have been adopted to classify and penalize the violent killing of women. Currently, 18 countries have legislation specifically criminalizing this form of violence. The Inter-American Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls (Femicide/Feminicide), developed by MESECVI, has been a key instrument in driving progress in this area.

Beyond femicide, MESECVI's recommendations have been instrumental in incorporating other forms of violence against women—psychological, sexual, economic, political and symbolic—into national legal frameworks. Instruments such as the Inter-American Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women in Political Life have driven legislative reforms across the region, prompting several countries to adapt their national laws to explicitly recognize and address this form of violence. Currently, MESECVI is developing a new Model Law focused on gender-based technology-facilitated and digital violence against women, further advancing protections in this evolving area. These ongoing efforts continue to strengthen women's access to justice and enhance legal and institutional protections against gender-based violence.

Apart from the legislative progress, MESECVI has also been crucial in strengthening institutional capacities to address violence against women. The Mechanism has promoted the creation of specialized judicial and police units to handle gender-based violence cases, advocated for integrated approaches across health, justice, and social protection sectors, and worked to ensure that national mechanisms for women's rights are effectively resourced and empowered.

Moreover, MESECVI has emphasized the importance of data collection and analysis as a key tool for tracking progress and informing policy decisions. The Mechanism has consistently urged States to adopt disaggregated data systems, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of the prevalence, causes, and consequences of gender-based violence, as well as the effectiveness of State responses. Today, all States in the region collect data on domestic violence, and most Latin American countries have expanded this to include statistics on specific forms of violence against women.

By aligning its efforts with the commitments of the Beijing Platform, MESECVI has reinforced the regional implementation of international standards, ensuring that gender-based violence is not only recognized as a violation of human rights but is also addressed through comprehensive legal, policy, and institutional frameworks. These combined efforts continue to shape a more just and equitable future for women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean.

f. SR VAWG: The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls

The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes, and Consequences (SRVAW) has engaged extensively with the BDPA, often referencing it as a cornerstone for advancing women's rights and addressing gender-based violence globally.

Over the 30 years since its creation, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls (SRVAWG) has highlighted the critical role of the BDPA as instrumental in defining violence against women and specifying a comprehensive framework for advancing women's rights and addressing violence against women and girls globally.

The Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls has played a pivotal role in emphasizing prevention for violence, as well as advancing accountability for sex and gender-based violence through thematic reports, country visits, and advocacy.

Over the years, the mandate has also examined in-depth structural failures and system-wide barriers to dealing with violence against women and girls[4]. The Special Rapporteur has consistently emphasized the structural and systemic nature of violence against women, recognizing it as a pervasive human rights violation that is both a cause and consequence of entrenched gender-based discrimination. The mandate has underscored that States have a legal obligation under international human rights law to address not only individual acts of violence but also the underlying social, economic, and political structures that perpetuate gender-based harm. In this regard, she has applied the due diligence framework to assess State responsibility

[4] Through its reports, the mandate has dedicated attention to exploring structural violence that specific groups of women face in participating equally and fully in public life, such as for example women in politics, women in sports, prostituted women and girls, stateless women and indigenous women – amongst others.

in both preventing and responding to such violence. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur has drawn attention to the principle of intersectionality as an essential component in addressing structural discrimination and violence against women. The mandate has argued that the failure of States to incorporate an intersectional analysis in their legal frameworks and policy measures undermines their obligations under international human rights treaties.

The mandate has further highlighted that the denial of women's economic and social rights—such as access to education, employment, healthcare, and social protection—exacerbates their vulnerability to violence and impedes their access to justice. The Special Rapporteur has, therefore, called for a holistic approach that integrates gender-sensitive legal reforms with broader structural changes to dismantle institutionalized discrimination, ensuring substantive equality and full compliance with States' obligations under international law. Additionally, the Rapporteur has called for greater attention to systemic issues, such as the impact of austerity measures and structural inequalities, which exacerbate violence against women and impede progress towards achieving BDPA goals.

The SRVAW has consistently discussed how the BDPA intersects with other frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5, particularly on gender equality and ending violence against women) and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. These interlinkages underscore the BDPA relevance in contemporary global human rights discourse. The SRVAW has emphasized the importance of the BDPA in creating international and regional standards to combat violence against women.

However, the mandate has also highlighted gaps in their implementation. In a 2017 report to the United Nations General Assembly, the mandate has highlighted the fragmentation and disconnection between global and regional instruments addressing violence against women, including BDPA and Security Council Resolution 1325. The mandate has, therefore, called for a more integrated and system-wide approach to align global and regional efforts and strengthen synergies between all legal instruments to accelerate the elimination of violence against women.

In her capacity as the chair of the EDVAW platform in 2020, the Special Rapporteur also facilitated the EDVAW platform's 25-year review of the BDPA, emphasizing gaps and persistent challenges, such as insufficient integration of women's rights into national laws,

limited financial resources for gender equality initiatives, and the continuing prevalence of violence against women and girls and the continuum of violence experienced by women that begins very early in their lives.

The Special Rapporteur has stressed the importance of accountability mechanisms in implementing the BDPA, noting that the lack of a legally binding global instrument specifically addressing violence against women remains a significant challenge. Such an instrument, supported by a dedicated monitoring body, could reinforce global standards, strengthen prevention and ensure a more robust state accountability. To fill this important gap, the current Rapporteur and several former mandate holders recommended the adoption of a dedicated global treaty on ending violence against women and girls as an optional protocol to the CEDAW Convention.

Furthermore, the mandate had called for the implementation of a global plan on ending violence against women that would align with the BDPA and other regional and international instruments, and seek to revitalize the role of the CSW, including by placing the issue of violence against women as a standing item on the agenda of the CSW. In August 2024, the Special Rapporteur, together with CEDAW, WGDAWG and MESECVI sent a letter to the CSW with recommendations on how it could be revitalized, making a compelling case that the process of revitalization must accompany the Beijing +30 and be an integral part of the global exercise of taking stock of Beijing +30.

g. WGDAWG: The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

The Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls (WGDAWG) is an independent mechanism created by the Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2010 to work with States and other entities to end discrimination against women and girls. The Working Group is made up of five experts from different regions of the world (Western European and Other, Asia-Pacific, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America).

The WGDAW is deeply connected to the BDPA, as **discrimination** against women and girls lies at the core of each critical area of concern, the commitments made by Member States, and the strategic objectives outlined in the Platform. The Working Group has historically engaged with States, civil society, the United Nations and other stakeholders to promote holistic,

inclusive, and life-cycle approaches aimed at achieving substantive gender equality for all women and girls.

In view of the broad thematic scope of its mandate, the WGDAW has identified **four thematic areas** of focus, namely, discrimination against women in political and public life, economic and social life, family and cultural life, and health and safety. The WG has documented progress and remaining challenges in these areas over the years.

On political and public life: While the WGDAW has recorded achievements in relation to women's political representation (e.g. increased representation of women in government positions and the implementation of gender quota laws for elected office in many states), it has also documented significant challenges. Globally, women continue to be underrepresented in all branches and at all levels of government. They are also underrepresented in international and regional entities, and their voices and concerns are often omitted from peace agreements and rebuilding strategies. Furthermore, women human rights defenders (WHRDs) around the world often face reprisals, harassment, violence, and even murder for their advocacy, particularly on issues involving SRHR and extractive industries.

On economic and social life: The WG has observed that social and cultural barriers still prevent many girls from completing their education, and legal discrimination, entrenched inequalities in wages and labour force participation and caring responsibilities prevent women from participating equally in economic and social life. Women continue to be paid less than men for work of equal value and are severely underrepresented in top leadership in decision-making bodies in business, finance and trade, and in cooperatives and trade unions. Furthermore, women have been grossly underrepresented in the formulation of the macroeconomic policies that have led to rocketing inequality, austerity measures and the undermining of care services on which women are more dependent than men.

On family and cultural life: The WG has found that far too often, women and girls are undervalued in the family, limited to certain roles, experience harmful practices and patriarchal oppression, and suffer other human rights abuses, including domestic violence and sexual abuse. Although discriminatory laws governing family life have been repealed in many countries, such laws are still in force in several places, including guardianship provisions, discriminatory personal status laws, and non-criminalization of marital rape.

On health and safety: The WG has found that too often, women's health is deprioritized and insufficiently resourced and that too many women are being deprived of their sexual and reproductive health rights. While the maternal mortality rate has declined, even now, a woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth every two minutes, and universal access to modern contraception and safe and legal abortion remains far from reality for most women and girls.[5].

IV. Conclusions

The EDVAW platform draws urgent attention to the lack of implementation of the BDPA for Action to take integrated comprehensive measures to prevent and eliminate violence and discrimination against women and girls. There is an urgent need for States to address structural gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls and to highlight the regression and backlash in gender equality in recent years.

This position paper, therefore, highlights the interplay between structural violence and direct forms of gender-based violence, such as domestic abuse and sexual assault. There has been growing attention on the larger structural systems and barriers which lead to violence and discrimination against women and girls. However, the Platform would like to raise attention to the fact that, when addressing violence, including interpersonal violence against women and girls, policy makers, researchers, government actors, and other stakeholders, have commonly focused on proximate-level determinants associated with violent acts, ignoring the role that larger structural systems and barriers play. Structural violence and discrimination cause harm through political, social, economic, or cultural systems and institutions, referring to the avoidable limitations imposed by society on certain groups, preventing them from achieving their full potential and quality of life. Structural violence and discrimination against women are expressed in all sectors, such as health, employment, political participation and education, in the public and private spheres.

[5] See 2024 Guidance document of the WGDAWG on Conscientious objection to abortion: key considerations (A/HRC/WG.11/41/1).

This position paper highlights the trends of structural violence and discrimination that the Platform continues to observe, especially in the persistence of femicides, the impact of poverty as a structural cause of violence against women and girls, the proliferation of violence against women and girls during times of conflict and natural disasters, violence in the area of sexual and reproductive health rights experienced by women in recent years, as well as increasing technology-facilitated violence against women and girls. Furthermore, the paper outlines how women and girls are disproportionately victims of conflict, poverty, and socioeconomic inequality.

Addressing sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls requires the creation of robust, gender-responsive, and comprehensive legal frameworks and essential services accessible to all women. These must be integrated into strong systems that address all forms of such violence and discrimination. Through this approach, we can expose the harm that comes from institutions that do not respond to women's needs and instead mistreat them and further exacerbate their marginalization.

With a view to addressing the systemic failures at national, regional and global levels in addressing structural violence and discrimination against women, the Platform offers, in the section below, actionable recommendations for states, civil society, and international organizations to reinvigorate efforts towards achieving the goals set out in the Beijing Platform for Action and eradicating gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls.

V. EDVAW Joint Recommendations and Calls to Action

As we reflect on the progress made over the past thirty years since the adoption of the BDPA, while significant advancements have been achieved, the journey toward gender equality remains incomplete. Globally, the prevalence of violence against women remains high. The time has come to deliver on the promises made in Beijing, to reclaim intersectionality, and to deliver high-impact solutions and investments to advance progress. To accelerate the realization of the commitments made in Beijing, the EDVAW Platform has formulated a set of joint recommendations and calls to action aimed at bridging the gaps that persist in the implementation of this landmark agenda. By adopting these targeted actions, governments, international organizations, and civil society can ensure that the promises of the BDPA translate into tangible and sustained progress for women and girls worldwide.

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The EDVAW Platform brings the following recommendations forward concerning the following:

International and legal frameworks and mechanisms that focus on women and girls

- Ratify and implement key international and regional standards on women's rights such as the CEDAW, the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Belem do Para Convention, the Maputo Protocol, the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women an Girls, and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), and as a means of improving prevention and ensuring reparations.

- Strengthen global and regional human rights mechanisms on women's rights and gender equality such as CEDAW, SR VAWG, WGDAWG, MESECVI, GREVIO and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Rapporteur on the Rights of Women.

- Revitalize the CSW to ensure that it can rise to its fullest potential and effectively address the regression and backsliding in gender equality. A more robust CSW should have a standing item on ending violence against women and girls on its agenda, as well as engage more closely with the members of the EDAW platform.

The BDPA

- Accelerate the implementation of the BDPA as a reiteration of the call made by the EDVAW Platform in 2021.
- Adopt a holistic and comprehensive approach to combating discrimination and violence against women, which includes the implementation of the BDPA
- Formulate and implement national plans to advance with the Beijing +30 Agenda. These plans must be intersectional and actionable and promote institutional coordination. Allocate adequate resources for their implementation.

National legal and policy frameworks

- Eliminate discriminatory laws and harmful practices that prevent women and girls from fully enjoying their human rights, in line with the objectives of the BDPA;
- Prioritize gender-responsive institutional policy frameworks that are well-resourced;
- Address harmful stereotypes and norms, as despite the absence of formal restrictions on women's employment or property rights in most countries, significant disparities in labour force participation, access to social protection, and asset ownership persist;
- Invest in comprehensive, evidence-based, long-term prevention strategies on violence against women that utilize multiple avenues to transform social norms and address unequal power dynamics;
- Prioritize funding to enforce laws that guarantee women's access to justice and ensure the provision of comprehensive, well-coordinated services.
- Advance the enactment of comprehensive laws that recognize the diverse and intersecting grounds on which women and girls are denied equality and experience discrimination and uphold their rights as victims and survivors of gender-based violence to justice, assistance, protection, and reparations. Monitoring mechanisms to accurately measure compliance with these plans and laws must be strengthened.
- Establish national plans and programs to ensure comprehensive reparations providing extensive coverage, with a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence;

Economic macro-policies

- Prioritize gender-responsive budgeting to ensure that public spending addresses the specific needs of women and girls.
- Restructure tax policies to alleviate the disproportionate burden on women, particularly those in low-income households.
- Implement all necessary legislative measures to safeguard women's sexual and reproductive rights, ensuring genuine and effective access to such rights;
- Implement, strengthen, and enforce regulations on technology-facilitated violence against women and girls and invest in digital literacy programs and bridging the digital divide that negatively affects women and girls;

Data

- Ensure the generation, collection, study, and analysis of statistical information on women's access to justice in a disaggregated manner, at a minimum by sex, age, marital status, geographic location and other factors that may increase their situation of vulnerability;

Equal and full participation of women and girls

- Recognizing women as equal holders of rights; promoting their ability to act and their dignity, equality and autonomy in public and private life;
- Encourage respect for the equal rights of girls, allowing them to be safe and reach their full potential. All actions and policies affecting girls must centre on the best interests of girls as children;
- Design and implement measures with the full participation of women, taking into account the particular situation of women affected by the intersecting forms of discrimination and violence
- Strengthen inclusive and democratic institutions and processes to ensure accountability and responsiveness to gender equality and the human rights of women and girls.

28 February 2025