

Item 4: Key trends on gender equality across the ECE Region

Dear distinguished ambassadors and delegates,

My name is Latiyah, a 28 year old human rights defender, working at Outright International, a US-based organization. Today I proudly speak on behalf of the Holding the Line Coalition, a group of progressive feminists from across our region.

The Beijing Platform for Action is supposed to be a robust multilateral instrument to achieve gender equality but in recent years, while some progress have been made we also see an alarming regression, and it is essential to address and confront these critical regressive trends that jeopardize the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls in all their diversity, including people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics.

Civil society including young people played an essential role in the drafting of the Beijing Declaration in 1995 and we play a crucial role in its implementation. Yet, we are witnessing a shrinking civic space, a rollback of rights, and the structural marginalization and silencing of our voices, throughout the multilateral system, at the Commission on the Status of Women, at the regional and national levels. Restrictive laws and policies target human rights defenders and NGOs, eroding the rights to freedom of assembly, association, expression and collective bargaining. This pushback and delegitimization of the multilateral system undermines gender justice.

We call on Member States to:

- Recommit to multilateralism, rooted in human rights and international law, that centers the meaningful participation of civil society and young people, including through virtual means.
- Institutionalize feminist leadership, and gender transformative approaches throughout policies and programmes, at all levels.
- Dismantle capitalist, extractivist, and neo-colonial systems that continue to perpetuate inequalities and violence, undermining economic justice and rights and destroying our planet.
- Deliver comprehensive and unimpeded access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health and rights, self-determination, and bodily autonomy, including safe and medical abortion.
- Eliminate foreign agent laws and ensure access to financial services and flexible and core funding to feminist and community-led groups.
- Implement all climate agreements in line with feminist action for climate justice. Stop polluting, stop the use of fossil fuels, and stop prioritizing profit over people and the planet.
- Finally, uphold the universal and non-discriminatory nature of human rights, especially for LGBTIQ+ persons, sex workers, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and forcibly displaced persons, regardless of their legal status, among others.

On behalf of the Holding the Line Coalition, we will continue to work constructively—and disruptively when needed— to ensure that the rights of women and girls, in all their diversity, are respected. We will not stop until gender justice is realized. We will continue to speak truth to power.

Thank you