

## EU joins forces with UN to tackle violence against women

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News

The EU has joined forces with the UN in a new bid to tackle the scourge of violence against women and girls.



The EU has joined forces with the UN in a new bid to tackle the scourge of violence against women | *Photo credit: Holyrood Magazine*

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The new global spotlight initiative aims to eliminate violence against women and girls worldwide. The campaign is supported by a multi-stakeholder trust fund, and the EU is its main contributor, with €500m.

The official launch of the initiative will be by EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini and European development Commissioner Neven Mimica on Wednesday at the UN General Assembly in New York.

Ahead of the ceremony, a Commission source outlined the campaign, telling this website, “Gender equality is a clear priority for EU.

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“The challenges regarding violence against women and girls (VAGW) are huge, with enormous personal, societal and economic costs all around the globe.”

The EU's gender action plan II addresses these challenges across three areas: physical and psychological integrity; economic empowerment and political participation.

The initiative will concentrate on the forms of violence most prevalent and prominently occurring in the regions/countries of intervention.

The targeted regions are Latin America, the Pacific region, the Caribbean and Africa and Asia. The forms of violence that will be targeted are femicide, domestic and family violence; sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking and economic (labour) exploitation.

The Commission source said, “Our partner countries have also recognised the need for action and are interested themselves. All measures will be implemented in close partnership with national authorities and civil society of our partner countries, because nothing can be done without their involvement and engagement.”

She added, “Many of our partner countries have themselves already established strategies to tackle this issue, but as this is a very complex issue, progress is slow. This initiative will support such efforts to advance stronger and to bring about change quicker.”

“Changing mindsets is the most difficult part. You can change legislations or improve access to services, like preventive or post violence care. But for changing mindsets you must engage with people at the grassroots level, and base your actions on individual and country specific analyses.”

She added, “We have to and will work with civil society in those countries. We will work with girls, fathers and mothers, with teachers, religious and community leaders and grass-root organisations. We have to instil change in the education systems, and as early on as possible, starting in schools and kindergartens even, and engage with all people that are involved.

“This initiative wants to reach the most remote areas, where traditional programmes don't reach to.”

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is described by the Commission as one of the “most widespread and devastating human rights violations across the globe.”

The Commission says it affects all societies, cutting across generational, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries.

Overall, it is claimed, over a billion lives are affected by such violence. It is estimated that 35 per cent of women have experienced violence at some point in their lives. This figure is as high as 70 per cent in some countries.

More than 700 million women worldwide were married as children before 18. Of those women, more than one in three - or some 250 million - before the age of 15. At least 200 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation in 30 countries.

The Commission source said, "This scourge is a barrier to gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment and overall sustainable development, and an impediment to the achievement of the SDGs.

"The EU-UN initiative is an expression of the same political will that was demonstrated by the international community in adopting the SDGs, with standalone goal 5 on gender equality and specific targets on ending violence against women and girls, as well as mainstreaming of gender equality across the entire SDG framework."

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter for the Parliament Magazine

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