

Statement by Denmark at CSW 59th session

March 2015, New York, United Nations

Madame Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome this opportunity to address the Commission on the Status of Women at its 59th session. While I would like to associate myself with the statement made by Latvia on behalf of the European Union, I would like to share with you some thoughts about the important issues this Commission will discuss the next two weeks.

This year we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Conference and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Over the last 20 years the Beijing Platform for Action has been a cornerstone in the global efforts for the empowerment of women and girls. The Beijing Platform for Action set out a roadmap towards a world in which every woman and girl can exercise her freedoms, her choices, and realize all her rights. This includes her right to live free from violence, her right to control her own body, to go to school, to participate fully and freely in political processes and to earn equal pay for equal work.

2015 is also an important year for Danish women and for Denmark. We celebrate that women since 1915 - the last one hundred years - have had the right to vote in and run for political elections. This major change came about with an amendment to the Danish constitution in 1915. And Denmark became one of the very first countries in the world where women's struggle led to obtaining this fundamental right.

Every session of the Commission on the Status of Women is important. But this year's session on Beijing +20 is particularly significant. During the next weeks we will discuss key achievements over the past two decades. We will share experiences, but also identify areas where further action is needed so that women and girls can become even more powerful agents of change in all our communities, countries and regions.

In many areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, countries throughout the world have advanced. But here 20 years later we still need to remind ourselves that there is no time or place for complacency. Challenges remain in all 12 critical areas of concern and new obstacles for women's empowerment have emerged since the Beijing conference.

Madame Chair

This year's CSW is even more crucial since we are entering the final stage of deciding on the new post-2015 development agenda and the universal sustainable development goals. These SDGs will set the course, also for women's empowerment, for the next 15 years. Therefore Denmark wants the 59th session of the CSW to send a strong and united message: The SDGs must include a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the human rights of women and girls. This stand-alone goal must focus on every woman's and girl's right to decide freely over their own body, if, when and with whom to have children and the right to a life free from coercion, violence and discrimination. But still the SDGs must also include broad based mainstreaming of gender equality across other focus areas. Goals, targets and indicators across the framework must reflect gender-related issues.

The post-2015 development framework provides a unique opportunity for pushing international political commitment to gender equality in an even more progressive direction. The process leading to an ambitious and progressive outcome of the post-2015 deliberations must build on experiences with implementing the Millennium Development Goals. The MDGs included the goal of promoting gender equality and empowerment of women as a specific objective. But in spite of progress we are far from having reached this goal.

And several critical equality issues were not adequately covered by the MDGs. So the world is a long way from achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. And poverty will not be a thing of the past without significant and rapid improvements to the lives of women and girls in all countries. This unfinished business must be seriously redressed in the Post-2015 framework. There can be no progress and sustainable development as long as there is discrimination and violence against women. We will not realize our full potential if women and girls continue to be held back.

Madame Chair

It is a well-known fact that women are disproportionately affected by poverty compared to men. Investing in women and girls and ensuring their equal rights, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights, have high positive payoffs across nations.

Access to sexual and reproductive health and rights – providing women the right to take control over their own body and to decide freely; if, when and with whom they

want to have children – pave the way for progress in many of the areas of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Gender equality and women's rights are fundamentally human rights issues and I strongly believe – and history shows - that societies will become stronger and more prosperous if the whole of society – men and women alike – are involved and can contribute.

While provisions for sexual and reproductive health and rights have been incorporated in policies and legislation in many countries there is still ample room for progress.

Men and boys must be engaged as agents of change in achieving gender equality, protecting the human rights of women and girls and ending gender-based violence through education and awareness raising and changing of behaviours. I would like to applaud UN Women for launching the HeForShe campaign. I was happy to sign the campaign last year and my own country Denmark is already working hard to include men and boys in our efforts to promote women's equal opportunities.

Madame Chair

Let me finish by reiterating that this year the international community will adopt a new global framework for sustainable development.

The empowerment of women, the rights and empowerment of adolescents and youth, and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights must be among the basic elements of a universal people centered, socially just and effective post-2015 agenda that will benefit all of humanity and which will yield high returns for both present and future generations.

Let us send a strong message from this session of the CSW in support of the human rights and empowerment of women and girls – in support of gender equality as a robust stand-alone goal and to highlight the centrality of the human rights of women and girl in the post-2015 agenda. And let us work together globally, to make it a reality for all – no matter who you are or where you live.

One last appeal for our future work: Remember that the Beijing Platform for Action is as valid and inspiring today as it was in 1995.

Thank you.