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Ahead of the 57th Commission on the Status of Women: The Swedish Women's Rights Movement demands increased governmental engagement to eliminate all forms of men's violence against women

The theme of the 57th session of the UN 'Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)' is violence against women and girls. As representatives of the Swedish women's rights movement, we share this statement to demonstrate our strength and unity in a time when women's rights are challenged in Sweden as well as globally.

The international development for women's rights is regressing in many respects. Reproductive and sexual rights that were previously taken for granted are now being contested. Around the world, women's lives and health are threatened because of illegal abortions, honor-related violence, female genital mutilation and rape. Women's rights are violated under the pretext of traditional and cultural values despite the fact that the international community, through global and regional agreements, has committed to eliminate men's violence against women and girls.

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women's Rights, recognizes that violence against women must be addressed as a primary step towards gender equality, development and peace. Sweden's policy for gender equality states that men's violence against women must stop and that women, men, girls and boys shall have equal rights and opportunities to physical integrity.

Although a growing number of states ratify agreements and documents, much work remains in terms of implementation. More resources and preventive work is needed to promote gender equality. In order for states to fulfill their obligations, and address the structural barriers that uphold inequality between men and women, states must prioritize and earmark appropriate funding for efforts aimed at ending men's violence against women. Such efforts must recognize both women's and men's right to health, education and work that enables economic self-sufficiency. Social inclusion of all citizens in society is vital in order to combat violence and crime, and reduce socio-economic vulnerability.

The UN CSW has previously addressed the need for preventive work in its outcome documents from 1998 and 2007. The fact that last year's session of the CSW ended without agreed conclusions, however, demonstrated once again that women's rights are questioned and threatened around the world.

With the current political backlash for women's rights we recognize the risk that current international agreements might be unraveled if re-opened for negotiations. We consequently oppose the UN initiative for a fifth world conference on women's rights, and promote instead

focused efforts to implement existing documents and agreements in Scandinavia, in Europe, and globally.

There is a need to mobilize the global women's rights movement and to make adequate use of the knowledge and experience that the movement holds. In this regard, we recognize the UN Commission on the Status of Women as a key institution. To further focus our efforts and to reverse the current backlash, the Nordic women's movement has initiated a Nordic Conference on Women Rights: *Nordic Forum Malmö 2014 - New Action on Women's Rights.* This conference will take place on the 12-15 of June in 2014, as a starting point for setting a common political agenda for the advancement of women's rights. Through this forum, we can move the politics of gender equality forward, instead of risking that already existing document are unraveled.

As the UN member states gather in New York 4-15 March in 2013 to discuss further steps to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and girls, we recommend:

• **States must stop deprioritizing efforts to end men's violence against women.** Governments need to show that they are serious about eliminating violence against women, by giving priority to the issue. Pre-existing commitments must be implemented through legislation, policies and normative frameworks. There is a clear need for increased funding and robust evaluations of current and future strategies to combat men's violence against women. Through the Beijing Platform, states have committed to reduce excessive military expenditures in order to intensify development efforts such as strengthening women's position in society.
• **Traditional and patriarchal values and practices that justify discrimination and violence against women must be combatted**. We cannot accept norms that allow men to control women and justify men's violence against women. States cannot be allowed to refer to traditional, religious or cultural values in order to avoid their commitments to eliminate men's violence against women.
• **More resources for preventive work that identifies the underlying causes of men's violence against women and promotes a change in social attitudes and power relations**. In order to change social norms, institutional practices and systems, as well as laws and policies that restrict women's and girls' lives, we need a better understanding of the structural causes of men's violence against women as well as knowledge of how the violence can be prevented. This requires awareness-raising through educational programs, information campaigns, and mobilization.
• **A broader cross-sector approach**. The economic climate, environmental degradation, religious fundamentalism, racism, as well as war and conflict, all contribute to men's violence against women. Men's violence against women and girls intensifies in situations of conflict and economic crisis. Furthermore, some groups of women are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination and greater risks due to discriminatory notions of for example ethnicity or disability. An intersectional approach must be considered and included in policies and strategies.
• **Increased investment in protection and support to women who have been subjected to violence**. Women and girls must be protected from further violence, and victims and survivors must receive adequate care and support in a safe and ethically irreproachable manner. Norms and mechanisms for judicial reviews of cases of violence need to be strengthened, including mechanisms for preservation of evidence as well as the public sector's capacity to treat victims

and survivors. In order to strengthen legal and social systems, cooperation between governments, other state institutions and civil society organizations is needed. Police agencies, prosecutors, lawyers and medical personnel must receive sufficient education on the problem of men's violence against women.

• **Partnerships between international agencies, governments and civil society**. Greater support to civil society organizations around the world is needed in order to break the silence surrounding the problem of men's violence against women and to raise awareness of the suffering of victims of violence. Civil society organizations have extensive knowledge and experience, but they often lack resources. Civil society organizations must have access to stable long-term funding, which also strengthens women as agents for change.

• **Statistics on men's violence against women must be collected and reported**. Clear definitions for data collection and statistics on men's violence against women, as well as clear guidelines for how cases are reported and dealt with in the judicial system, must be established. Such definitions and standards are needed in order to simplify data collection, make data comparable across countries, as well as to draw society's attention to the magnitude of the problem and the costs for society.

• **Support the UN Secretary-General's initiative to combat men's violence against women**. UN member states should give strong support to the campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women and the social mobilization platform Say NO – UNiTE.

• **Intensified efforts to prevent men's violence against women in conflict.** To prevent conflict-related sexual violence against girls and women, broad efforts aimed at both civilian as well as military perpetrators are needed. International efforts against impunity, such as the ICC, are important, but of even greater importance is that the UN member states advance their efforts to bring perpetrators to justice in national courts. Through its resolution 1325, the UN Security Council has acknowledged that women's protection from violence is inter-linked with, and cannot be separated from, their rights and opportunities to meaningful political participation. The participation of women at all levels and stages before, during, and after a conflict is a prerequisite for women's and girls' safety. Women's participation on equal terms with men in peace and security politics must be prioritized by all conflict and non-conflict states.

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