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Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls

European Parliament resolution of 6 February 2013 on the 57th session on UN CSW: Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls (2012/2922(RSP))

(2016/C 024/02)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in Beijing and the subsequent outcome documents adopted at the United Nations Beijing + 5 and Beijing + 10 Special Sessions on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted on 9 June 2000 and 11 March 2005 respectively,
 - having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 1 March 2006 entitled 'A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010' (COM(2006)0092),
 - having regard to its resolution of 25 February 2010 on Beijing + 15 — UN Platform for Action for Gender Equality ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 5 April 2011 on priorities and outline of a new EU policy framework to fight violence against women ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence,
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines on Violence Against Women and Girls and Combating All Forms of Discrimination Against Them (General Affairs Council of 8 December 2008), and the Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development as part of the Council Conclusions on the MDGs adopted in June 2010 (Foreign Affairs Council),
 - having regard to the report of the meeting of the Expert Group on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls held in Bangkok from 17 to 20 September 2012,
 - having regard to the outcome report of the UN Stakeholders' Forum on Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women, convened at UN headquarters on 13 and 14 December 2012,
 - having regard to the question to the Commission on the 57th session on UN CSW: Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls (O-000004/2013 — B7-0111/2013),
 - having regard to Rules 115(5) and 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas violence against women and girls remains one of the most serious global and structural human rights violations, and is a phenomenon that involves victims and perpetrators of all ages, educational backgrounds, incomes and social positions, and is both a consequence and a cause of inequality between women and men;
- B. whereas violence against women persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality and empowering women; whereas it affects women and girls in all parts of the world, irrespective of factors such as age, class, or economic background, and harms families and communities, has significant economic and social costs, and restricts and undermines economic growth and development;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 348 E, 21.12.2010, p. 11.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 296 E, 2.10.2012, p. 26.

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- C. whereas all forms of violence against women need to be tackled, namely physical, sexual and psychological violence, as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action, as they all restrict women's possibility to fully enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- D. whereas harassment and violence against women encompass a wide range of human rights violations such as: sexual abuse, rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, prostitution, trafficking of women and girls, violation of women's sexual and reproductive rights, violence against women at work, violence against women in conflict situations, violence against women in prison or care institutions, violence against lesbians, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, and various harmful traditional practices such as genital mutilation, crimes of honour and forced marriages; whereas any one of these abuses can leave deep psychological scars and involve physical or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts and coercion, damage the general health of women and girls, including their reproductive and sexual health, and in some instances result in death;
- E. whereas, while gender inequality and discrimination increase the risks of violence, other forms of discrimination on grounds such as disability or belonging to a minority group, can increase women's risks of exposure to violence and exploitation; whereas the current responses to violence against women and girls and any accompanying prevention strategies are not sufficiently inclusive of women and girls who suffer multiple forms of discrimination;
- F. whereas numerous structural forms of violence against women exist, among them limiting women's right to choose, their right to their bodies and bodily integrity, their right to education, and their right to self-determination, and depriving women of their full civil and political rights; recalls that a society where women and men are not ensured equal rights perpetuates a structural form of violence against women and girls;
- G. whereas both local and international NGOs, such as advocacy groups and those running women's shelters, emergency phone lines and support structures, are essential for progress to be made in eradicating violence against women and gender-based violence;
- H. whereas working to end violence against women and gender-based violence, if it is to be effective, requires international cooperation and action, firm commitment from political leaders at all levels, as well as more substantial levels of financing;
- I. whereas UN policies and actions for eliminating violence against women and girls and gender-based violence are of the utmost importance in bringing these issues to the forefront of international policy-making and action, and in encouraging EU Member States to address the issue of violence against women more systematically;
1. Confirms its commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action and to the range of actions for gender equality outlined therein; reiterates that working to end violence against women and girls demands a coordinated and multisectoral approach, involving all stakeholders and also addressing the underlying causes of violence, such as direct or indirect discrimination, prevailing gender stereotypes, and lack of equality between women and men;
 2. Underlines the importance of a positive outcome at the 57th session of the UN CSW to be held from 4 to 15 March 2013, including the adoption of a set of forward-looking agreed conclusions that will contribute in a significant way to ending violence against women and girls, including women with disabilities, indigenous women, migrant women, adolescent girls and women with HIV/AIDS, thus making a difference worldwide;
 3. Considers that among the key priorities for addressing violence against women and girls should be the elimination of discriminatory socio-cultural attitudes that reinforce women's subordinate place in society and result in the toleration of violence against women and girls in both private and public spheres, in the home and in workplaces and educational institutions; in this context, hopes there will be accelerated progress in the development of international legal norms, standards and policies that will improve services and protection for victims, raise awareness in order to change behaviour and attitudes, and, above all, ensure sufficient and consistent implementation in all parts of the world;

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4. Considers that the EU and its Member States, in order to become more efficient actors globally, must also step up their domestic efforts to eliminate violence against women and gender-based violence; therefore reiterates its call on the Commission to propose an EU strategy against violence against women, including a directive laying down minimum standards; in this context, also calls on both the EU and the individual Member States to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;
5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to review the policies, programmes and resources available for confronting violence within and outside the EU, and to strengthen their strategy with upgraded instruments and ambitious goals;
6. Calls on the EU and its Member States to increase their resource allocation for ending violence against women and girls, including at local, national, European, and global levels, and to provide support to actors who are working to end violence against women and gender-based violence, in particular to NGOs active in this field;
7. Expresses its strong support for the work of UN WOMEN, which is a central actor in the UN system for eliminating violence against women and girls worldwide and bringing together all relevant stakeholders in order to generate policy change and coordinate actions; calls on all UN member states, as well as on the EU, to increase their funding for UN WOMEN;
8. Calls on the EU External Action Service to make increasing efforts to ensure that the human rights of women and girls are protected and advanced in all actions and dialogues involving it, and to speed up its implementation of the EU Guidelines on Violence Against Women and Girls and Combating All Forms of Discrimination Against Them, as well as creating closer links with the work being carried out against violence against women and girls in the framework of EU development cooperation, while also supporting defenders of women's rights, human rights and LGBT rights;
9. Calls for the development of programmes and institutional mechanisms at international and regional levels, so as to ensure that prevention strategies against violence against women and girls are at the centre of all international actions designed to respond to humanitarian crises related to conflict and post-conflict situations or natural disasters;
10. Calls on the EU to fully support the Expert Group's recommendation that the CSW 2013 should agree to develop a Global Implementation Plan to End Violence against Women and Girls, having a particular focus on the prevention of violence and providing monitoring and operational guidance regarding the existing international obligations (CEDAW and BPFA), to be endorsed by all UN member states and to be launched in 2015;
11. Calls on the EU to support the launching of a Global Advocacy Campaign for the prevention of violence against women and girls and gender-based violence, in order to take further steps to make our communities and countries safe and fully respect the human rights of women and girls worldwide; believes this campaign should build on existing partnerships between states and other relevant actors, including civil society and women's organisations;
12. Calls on the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to take full account of reports and proposals concerning violence against women;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.