

## **Remarks by Lakshmi Puri at CSW57 side event : “Violence against Women – Our Concern, Our Response**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting UN Women to this important event. It is my pleasure to be here with other champions of gender equality and women’s empowerment who are also strong supporters of UN Women—the Council of Europe and its distinguished representatives from the Committee of Ministers and Parliamentary Assembly, as well as with Ms. Vallaud-Belkacem, Minister of Women’s Rights of France.

Today, we have already heard about the importance of the Istanbul Convention and the role it plays in strengthening the international normative framework for the elimination of violence against women. We at UN Women very much welcome the Istanbul Convention as an important addition to the evolving body of norms and standards around the globe.

And we have been working closely with the Council of Europe to emphasize the important value of the Convention and have encouraged more parties to become signatories to the Convention, including non-members of the Council of Europe.

The Istanbul Convention complements existing legal norms, and expands the international framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It represents a “gold standard” and indeed, if I may say, is *primus inter pares* among instruments specifically targeting the elimination of violence against women.

Europe now has a strong, legally-binding convention which sets out clear directives and commitments on the prevention, protection, prosecution and the response to violence against women, particularly in the area of domestic violence.

A number of other regional agreements have either directly or indirectly addressed the issue of violence against women. This includes declarations – such as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – to charters and protocols – such as the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Maputo protocol – to full-fledged conventions.

But to date there are only two conventions on the elimination of violence against women, the Convention of Belém do Pará, adopted in 1994 by the Organization of American States, and the Istanbul Convention.

Apart from providing the necessary legal frameworks to end violence against women, these documents have a symbolic importance. Each new agreement made between sovereign States to reaffirm women’s inviolable human rights tilts the scale towards positive change.

Conventions consolidate and reflect growing global consensus in the movement of the elimination of violence against women and help to address the underlying unequal

power relations between women and men. Together, these texts constitute a powerful body of global and regional norms and standards that are integrated into national and local laws, policies and actions.

The Istanbul Convention builds on the important work carried out in various fora, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, complemented by General Recommendation 19 of the CEDAW Committee, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

And as we meet here at the United Nations for the Commission on the Status of Women, what can we learn from the Istanbul Convention to inform our efforts? What elements of the Convention would we like to see as part of a progressive and forward-looking CSW outcome that is the Agreed Conclusions?

There are many important aspects of the Convention we could examine, but allow me to highlight a few that go beyond the need for prevention, protection, including the provision of services, and prosecution, which as we already know are part of the comprehensive response to all forms of violence against women.

First, the Convention makes the crucial link between the elimination of violence against women and the achievement of gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. There is no doubt that the enjoyment of the right to be free from violence is interconnected with women's ability to fully exercise and enjoy all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms they are entitled to.

This is essential to addressing the root causes of violence. Violence against women does not happen in a vacuum – it is intrinsically linked to the multiple forms of gender-based discrimination in the political, economic and social spheres.

This is especially important in prevention. Prevention is not just about awareness-raising campaigns; a whole ecosystem of policies must be in place and connections must be made with other gender policies in order for it to be effective.

Secondly, the Convention puts particular emphasis on the importance of early prevention, which is also the case that UN Women has been making. The best way to stop violence is to prevent it from happening in the first place.

For this, we need more awareness-campaigns, but we also need education programmes that teach human rights, equality and mutual respect. Measures are needed to change existing patterns of behaviour of women and men that are based on prejudices, gender stereotypes and social norms that perpetuate or condone violence against women.

This includes tackling narrow models of masculinities and the need to work with men and boys not just for them to stand up against violence against women to fundamentally change gender relations.

This approach is recognized in the Convention and must be carried forward to the CSW Agreed Conclusions. Related to this point is the reaffirmation that culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called “honour” cannot be invoked as grounds to justify any act

of violence. This is clear in CEDAW, in Beijing, and in the Istanbul Convention. It must be clear, too, in the Agreed Conclusions of this CSW session.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, I would like to make a point about the enormous gap between commitment and action. Despite the existence of large body of norms and standards—seven out of ten women still face physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner during their lifetime. 603 million women live in a country where domestic violence is not considered a crime. One in three girls in developing countries is likely to be married as a child bride. Now is the time for action.

Together with other norms and standards, the Convention is instrumental in accelerating implementation because of its emphasis on the due diligence of States in preventing and responding to violence against women.

This also sends a clear message that contradicts the long-standing perception that violence against women is a private matter. Instead, it is a matter that requires commitment and action at the highest political level and at all levels of the State.

In addition, the reporting and monitoring mechanisms defined in the Convention are, as in CEDAW, essential to bringing about the necessary changes in laws, policies and programmes. We have seen it with the Convention of Belem do Para – its mechanisms are great incentives for implementation.

So let me end with a strong call to action. First, more governments need to ratify the Istanbul Convention. It is a shame that almost two years after its conception, only three countries have ratified the Convention.

Second, I would like to make a call to action for a greater focus on implementation. We must close the gap between commitments and the reality we see today – the pervasiveness of violence against women in all countries.

Finally, I would like to call for a progressive outcome at the CSW. This is an opportunity we cannot miss. We need agreed conclusions that are bold, forward-looking and actionable. We count on all Member States to deliver on that front.

Thank you.

Retirado de: <http://www.unwomen.org/lo/news/stories/2013/3/remarks-by-lakshmi-puri-at-csw57-side-event#sthash.vMBFPBAC.dpuf>