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Side-event LDO/FOKUS

Challenges in preventing gender based violence in gender equality friendly societies

Norway, together with the other Nordic countries, is over and over again ranked among the top ten countries in the world when living standards and level of gender equality is measured.

This we are proud of – but it didn't happen by itself. For Norway it did not happen because of our oil. Other oil-producing countries around the world normally rank on the bottom ten in the same reports.

The Nordic welfare states are based on a shared political goal of encouraging strong social cohesion. A social model based on core values of equal opportunities, social solidarity and security for all.

This happened due to courageous people fighting for human rights, governments with political will, co-operations between governments and the social partners, co-operation across political boundaries.

We have set some standards we are proud of.

What a paradox one could say it is that we – to such a high extent – face the challenges of gender based violence.

Violence being the utmost consequence of the suppression of women.

Most of the violence women are exposed to is inflicted by those who are closest to them: their partners, their parents and other family members.

One of the main causes of violence against women is gender inequality. Violence produces - and over generations - reproduces gender inequality. Recent research shows a negative correlation between the level of gender equality in a family and the level of violence. Domestic violence is more prevalent in families who base their everyday life in a traditional gender stereotypic way than in families who share their family responsibilities more equal. This correlation also applies in society as such.

The level of gender equality is increasing but the number of reported incidences of domestic violence does not decrease as one would expect.

I believe that one of the reasons for this is that we have managed to reduce the taboos associated with domestic violence. In the 1970s women worldwide formed a common political front to set men's violence against women on the agenda. In the 80s and 90s the shelter movement in Norway and other women's organizations continued the pressure on the Government. Private actors have made a major effort in making violence against women a public matter and we owe them gratitude for their work.

Today the measures to combat domestic violence are largely initiated and founded from a political level.

All forms of violence are crimes and must be prosecuted.

With the help from woman's organizations, we have succeeded to reduce the shame, taboos and privatization of this theme and encourage women to seek help. The amount of reported domestic violence is frightening but it also means that women in Norway are speaking up and this is a wanted development!

The term "equality" does not only refer to equality between women and men. In addition to gender we must speak of equality regardless of social and socio-economic background, ethnic background, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, and so on. These are all factors which may affect a person's vulnerability to violence and abuse. Vulnerability can also be increased by various factors like pregnancy, migration and drugs.

Individual's life situation and background correlates with exposure to violence, how violence is experienced by the individual and with the opportunity to end a violent relationship. Relations can be based on some or all the mentioned factors at the same time, and we must remember this reality when developing strategies to eliminate violence against women.

Violence has serious far-reaching physical and mental consequences for the woman who is exposed, her children and society as such. We do know that the consequences are obstacles to real equality. We therefore continue to work to promote equality and combat stereotypes in the fight against domestic violence.

Violence against women knows no boundaries.

It is a global challenge and it needs to be addressed both on a global level as well as on a national level.

Too many women and girls are denied their right to sexual and reproductive health. The vast majority are poor women and young girls in developing countries. Millions of women lack access to contraception and to the sexual and reproductive health information and services they need to choose their family size and improve their own and their children's life chances.

Millions more are living with HIV and sexually transmitted infections that could have been prevented or treated. Every minute a woman dies from complications of pregnancy or childbirth. Some 80 million women have unintended or unwanted pregnancies each year. For too many their only option is abortion in unsafe conditions.

Devastating facts and deprivation of any persons' right to freedom over their own lives.

Why is this?

Despite on what we hear in international forums like the UN – we know that this has nothing to do with culture or freedom of religion. This is about

power, inequality, lack of political will and courage. And lack of esteem of women as precious human beings.

I am grateful for taking part in this very important session of CSW and ready to put the political power needed to reach a positive joint outcome of the session.

Thank you.