



Thematic Session

The Crisis of the human rights of women and girls, including in the COVID-19 context, and the issues of migration, social and racial justice.

Concept Note

March 29th, 2021

13:00 – 14:20 (GMT-6 Mexico City Time)

22:00 – 23:20 (GMT-6 Mexico City Time)

Background

In 1995, the most visionary agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls was created by 189 governments and thousands of activists worldwide: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As a defining framework for change, the Platform for Action made comprehensive commitments under 12 critical areas of concern, being the promotion and protection of the human rights of women one of such priorities. In 2021, 26 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, not a single country has achieved gender equality, and the human rights of women and girls are still constantly threatened.

When it comes to women's and girls' full and equal enjoyment of human rights, which is a governments' mandate and core to the work of the United Nations, little progress has been achieved. Women's full enjoyment of their rights remains undermined by discriminatory legislation and policies; persistent high rates of gender-based violence; harmful practices and intersectional discrimination, both in the public and private spheres.

The unprecedented and multiple crises brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have had a negative impact on all sectors of society worldwide, exacerbating existing inequalities and undermining the enjoyment of people's human rights. School closures make girls and young women more vulnerable to child marriage, early pregnancy and gender-based violence, which decrease their likelihood of being able to pursue their education resulting in devastating impacts on their future prospects for economic stability and security. COVID-19 has disrupted efforts to end child marriage; projections have indeed indicated a potential increase in 13 million additional child marriages between 2020 and 2030. The crisis has also exacerbated a pre-existing lack of access to health and reproductive services, as health systems have redirected resources to deal with the outbreak of COVID-19, resulting in sexual and reproductive health services being deemed as "not essential".



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Gender-based violence against indigenous women and forced or early marriage, and harmful ancestral practices such as female genital mutilation, are reported to be on the increase in some communities. Restrictions on the free movement of people have increased the risk of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTQI) persons being subjected to abuse during police identity checks.

Many allegations of rape and sexual harassment by security forces have been reported during the pandemic, while access to justice for victims of domestic and sexual violence remains a challenge in several countries. Survivors of such violence have often had no access to justice, proper psychosocial support, safe shelters or sexual and reproductive health services.

The COVID-19 crisis has also exacerbated the already fragile situation of women and girls on the move, who face a greater risk of exposure to gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation and struggle to find access to protection and health services.

The impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic on human rights highlights the extent to which it has exposed systemic gaps in human rights protection that have undermined resilience.

After more than two decades, the Beijing Platform for Action, and specifically the section on human rights, remains relevant. The Generation Equality Forum represents a once-in-a-decade opportunity to advance women's rights and to ensure that gender equality is at the centre of the post-COVID agenda and in fragile contexts where women and girls are on the move.

Through its six Action Coalitions, government representatives, civil society, international organisations and the private sector, are expected to propose a targeted set of concrete, ambitious and immediate actions within a 5-year period to deliver tangible impact on gender equality and girls and women's human rights.

General Objective

To discuss the achievements, setbacks and opportunities regarding the human rights of women and girls worldwide and generate multi-stakeholder recommendations to ***accelerate the full enjoyment of women and girl's human rights worldwide.***

Specific Objectives

- To discuss in multi-sectoral groups the progress and pending issues related to the human rights of girls and women 26 years after the adoption of the PBA.



- To reflect on the differentiated impact that systemic and systematic discrimination against women has on the diversity of women and their human rights.
- To learn and exchange experiences on how women in their diversity challenge and create systemic alternatives to the current human rights crisis, especially in a context of high risk, and vulnerability, and the fragile situation of women and girls on the move.

Participants

- Civil society organisations
- UN Agencies
- Governments
- Youth

Format

This virtual dialogue will be held on March 29 from 13:00 – 14:30 (MEX time) and in the evening from 22:00 – 23:30 (MEX time). The discussion will be driven by an experienced feminist moderator who will direct the conversation between nine different stakeholders and the audience to ensure a diversity of views. The audience will be able to interact by using the chat on the platform. Simultaneous interpretation will be available.

- 1 feminist moderator + 2 government representatives at ministerial level,
- 4 representatives from civil society,
- 2 international organisations (UN agency),
- 1 representative from the private sector.



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Suggested time	Proposed activity
13:00 – 13:05 22:00 – 22:05	Welcome remarks
13:05 – 13:45 22:05 – 22:45	<p>Moderated discussion with the panelists. Participants have between 3-4 minutes to answer each question.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the main threats in the current global context, including the COVID19 crisis, to fulfill women and girls' rights and how should we address them? - What do you think are the main advancements/achievements regarding women and girls' human rights for the past 25 years? - What social, political, and economic conditions have contributed to such advancements/achievements? - What should governments, civil society, international organizations, and the private sector can do to accelerate women and girls' human rights fulfilment within the next decade?
13:45 – 14:15 22:45 – 23:15	Q&A session. Moderator reads selected questions from the chat.
14:15 – 14:20 23:15 – 23:20	Closing: moderator thanks participants and audience.