

The EU and the UN team up to eliminate violence against women and girls

The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative was launched by the EU High Representative / Vice-President of the Commission **Federica Mogherini** and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development **Neven Mimica**, together with the UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** and the UN Deputy Secretary-General **Amina Mohammed**.

Commissioner **Mimica** said: *“Violence against women and girls is one of the greatest injustices of our time, which crosses all borders, generations, nationalities and communities. It deeply touches our hearts and our minds. And it is a serious barrier to any society’s full development potential. Today’s launch of our Spotlight Initiative is a major step forward: with half a billion euros as the “seed money” and the full support of the United Nations, I am convinced that together we can change the lives of women and girls for the better and achieve a truly sustainable development.”*

“Elimination of violence against all women and girls is a precondition for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development,” stated UN Secretary-General **António Guterres**, emphasising that: *“Gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, both as a standalone goal and as a cross-cutting element central to the achievement of all SDGs.”*

The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative is supported by a multi-stakeholder trust fund, with the EU as its main contributor in the order of EUR 500 million, which is open to other donors.

Over the next few years, comprehensive programmes will be implemented to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, such as sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices; trafficking and economic (labour) exploitation; femicide; domestic and family violence. Core areas of intervention would include strengthening legislative frameworks, policies and institutions, preventive measures, access to services and improving data gathering in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

Consistent with the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Spotlight Initiative will apply a rights-based approach, and give particular attention to the most marginalised women and girls in order to “leave no-one behind”. It will aim at galvanizing political commitments at the highest level and at providing large-scale targeted support, as well as at building new partnerships. It will also raise awareness on the widespread, persistent and detrimental impact of violence against women and girls.

Background

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most widespread and devastating human rights violations across the globe. It affects all societies, cutting across generational, socio-economic, educational and

geographic boundaries. Overall over a billion lives today are touched by violence. It is estimated that 35% of women have experienced violence at some point in their lives. This figure is as high as 70% in some countries.

Moreover, more than 700 million women worldwide were married as children before 18. Of those women, more than 1 in 3 – or some 250 million – before the age of 15. At least 200 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation in 30 countries.

This scourge is a barrier to gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment and overall sustainable development, and an impediment to the achievement of the SDGs.

The Spotlight Initiative is an expression of the same political will that was demonstrated by the international community in adopting the SDGs, with standalone Goal 5 on Gender Equality and specific targets on ending violence against women and girls, as well as mainstreaming of gender equality across the entire SDG framework.

The New European Consensus on Development, the EU's new global approach to sustainable development for the years to come, also underlines the commitment of the EU and all its Member States to gender equality.