



## International Women's Day

8 March 2025

### **International and regional experts urge global commitment to combat gender-based violence and discrimination.**

*GENEVA/BANJUL/WASHINGTON/STRASBOURG (8 March 2025) – On this International Women's Day, as we mark three decades since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action — adopted just a year after the Belém do Pará Convention — UN and regional expert mechanisms on women's human rights and members of the [EDVAW Platform](#)\* raise their collective voices to reaffirm the urgent need to eliminate violence and discrimination against women and girls and to push back against the alarming regression in gender equality worldwide.*

The theme of International Women's Day 2025, "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment," reflects a global call to action to ensure that every woman and girl enjoys her human rights and substantive equality and is empowered to thrive in all aspects of life. At the international level, this vision is anchored in the nearly universally ratified Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a binding instrument, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995, which remains the most comprehensive framework for advancing gender equality. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provides a strategic roadmap for dismantling systemic barriers that maintain discrimination and hinder women's full participation in all spheres of life. The Platform has a transformative vision and calls attention to intersectional inequalities both between and within countries that have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. It also identifies violence against women as both a cause and a consequence of entrenched gender inequality and calls for decisive action to eliminate it.

Over the past three decades, progress has been made through stronger legal protections, institutional reforms, and increasing global recognition of gender-based violence as a critical human rights emergency. The theme of the 2025 International Women's Day reinforces the urgency of fulfilling the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, ensuring that no woman or girl is left behind in the pursuit of rights, equality, development and empowerment.

Unfortunately, alarming setbacks are occurring — hard-won legal and policy advances are being reversed, dedicated gender equality institutions and programs are deprioritized and defunded, and discriminatory laws are being reintroduced. Violence against women

and girls remains pervasive, with femicide, intimate partner violence, and sexual and gender-based violence continuing at alarming levels. Digital spaces have become a new battleground for exploitation and violence, restricting women's ability to engage fully and equally in public life. Sexual and reproductive health rights are under attack, undermining women's and girls' safety, autonomy, and well-being. In particular, the persistence of forced pregnancies among girls — who should be protected, not forced into motherhood — represents a grave violation of their rights, perpetuating cycles of violence and inequality.

Other fundamental rights, including access to education for girls, freedom of movement, and protection from harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, are also at risk. Very few countries have attained equality of women's participation in governance institutions. At the same time, economic crises, armed conflicts, and climate change disproportionately affect women and girls, exposing them to heightened risks of violence, displacement, and exploitation. Feminist movements and women human rights defenders, who are essential to driving progress, are facing growing threats and repression.

As conveyed in our [position paper](#) for the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women's review of Beijing +30, reversing this regression requires urgent, collective, and decisive action. States, international organisations, women and civil society organizations, and all other relevant actors must reassert their commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action, prioritizing the equality of women and girls and adopting comprehensive, well-funded policies to counteract the setbacks seen in recent years. For these measures to be effective, they must address emerging challenges, particularly new forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls recognizing the diversity of their experiences, particularly in the digital space.

The EDVAW Platform welcomes the recent adoption of the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (CEVAWG), which presents a transformative opportunity to strengthen protections for women and girls, ensuring their safety and full participation in all aspects of life. By tackling one of the most persistent barriers to gender equality, CEVAWG helps create environments where women and girls can thrive — free from violence and discrimination.

Ensuring access to justice for survivors requires stronger accountability mechanisms and the effective enforcement of protections to end impunity. Women human rights defenders and feminist organizations play a crucial role in advancing gender equality and need adequate protection and support to continue their work without fear of retaliation or suppression. Economic policies should be gender-responsive, removing structural barriers that limit women's participation in the workforce and ensuring access to productive resources while also recognizing and addressing the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work.

Achieving gender equality demands the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in decision-making at all levels, particularly in governance, peacebuilding, and economic leadership. To ensure inclusivity, governments must adopt intersectional approaches to policymaking, addressing the multi-faceted challenges faced by marginalized women and girls due to intersectional discrimination. This requires targeted measures, such as quotas, capacity-building programs, and inclusive consultations to ensure diverse voices are heard and valued.

Thirty years ago, the global community united in Beijing to commit to a transformative vision of gender equality — one grounded in human rights, dignity, and justice. Today, that vision faces unprecedented challenges, as backlash against human rights and gender equality norms — key achievements of multilateralism — continues to be on the rise. This is a critical moment that demands urgency and resolve. Governments, civil society, and international organizations must stand united against regression and recommit to bold, concrete actions to advance the rights of women and girls. This includes strengthening legal frameworks, increasing funding for gender equality initiatives, and holding stakeholders accountable for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as other international instruments that protect women’s human rights. Complacency is not an option; the time for decisive, sustained action is now.

This year, as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, we are reminded of the bold, transformative vision it set forth for gender equality and women’s empowerment. This milestone offers a unique opportunity to reflect on progress, acknowledge remaining gaps, and recommit to the aspirations and vision of 1995.

We are committed to driving progress and making gender equality a reality in our lifetime. Change cannot wait — action is needed now.

\* **The experts of the [EDVAW Platform](#):** Ms. Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls (Co-chair of EDVAW Platform); Ms. Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, and Vice-Chairperson of the African Commission on People and Human Rights (Co-chair of EDVAW Platform); Ms. Nahla Haidar El Addal, Chairperson, UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Ms. Roberta Clarke, Commissioner and the Rapporteur on the Rights of Women of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; Ms. Laura Nyirinkindi (Chair), Ms. Claudia Flores (Vice-Chair), Ms. Dorothy Estrada Tanck, Ms. Ivana Krstić, and Ms. Haina Lu, Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; Ms. Maria-Andrinai Kostopoulou, President of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence; Ms. Gloria Camacho, President of the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention.

*The Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW Platform) was launched in March 2018. It comprises seven United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms on violence against women and women's rights operating at the international and regional levels. Independent expert mechanisms play a decisive role in monitoring the implementation of the human rights standards necessary to tackle violence and discrimination against women. Their work provides essential information on the situation of women's rights, on actions undertaken to combat violence against women, as well as on urgent issues, gaps, and shortcomings in the implementation of international standards and government commitments. The Platform aims to strengthen institutional links and thematic cooperation between the mechanisms to work towards harmonised strategies and undertake joint action. By enhancing collaboration, its goal is to improve the implementation of the existing international legal and policy framework on violence against women and their discrimination.*