

CSW70 Side Event Concept Note

March 17, 2026 - 4:45-6:00 p.m.

**Conference Room 9 (CR9), United Nations Headquarters
405 East 42nd Street New York, NY 10017**

“Ensuring Justice for Women and Girls with Disabilities Survivors of Sexual Violence in Central Asia: Legal and Procedural Changes Needed to Guarantee Access to Justice”

This event is organized by [Equality Now](#), an international human rights organization, and the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN, in collaboration with disability rights advocacy groups from Central Asia (Association of Women with Disabilities 'Ravenstvo' Kyrgyzstan, Association of Women with Disabilities 'Shyrak' Kazakhstan) and national women's and human rights organizations from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (Human Rights Movement Bir Duino and Ilm Nuri Markazi). The meeting aims to align with the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) in 2026, which focuses on ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers.

In recent years, the Governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have made certain legal and policy reforms to address violence and discrimination against women. Despite the progress, significant challenges remain in translating reforms into meaningful, accessible and equitable justice in practice, especially for women with disabilities survivors of sexual violence.

In 2025, Equality Now, in collaboration with experts, researchers and partner organizations, conducted [research](#) in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, examining how criminal justice systems in these three countries respond to cases of sexual violence against women

with disabilities. The resulting report [Seeking justice: Sexual violence against women with disabilities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan](#) outlines key recommendations for improving access to justice for women with disabilities survivors of sexual violence.

The findings [were presented at a high-level event](#) at the Senate of the Republic of Kazakhstan in December 2025, held with the participation of key government institutions and representatives of civil society, including women's rights and disability rights organisations. The event served as a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and laid the groundwork for sustained national and regional advocacy to advance access to justice for women and girls with disabilities survivors of sexual violence.

This event will:

1. **Share key findings** from [Equality Now's 2025 report](#) [Seeking justice: Sexual violence against women with disabilities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan](#). The report examines factors that heighten the risk of violence, reviews national legal and policy frameworks in light of States' obligations under the CRPD, CEDAW and other international human rights instruments, and identifies critical legal gaps, including the absence of consent-based definitions of rape. It further assesses systemic barriers to justice, such as discriminatory stereotypes, burdensome evidentiary standards, harmful forensic practices and the lack of procedural and reasonable accommodations. The report aims to offer concrete, survivor-centred, disability- and gender-sensitive recommendations for reforming justice systems in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

2. **Highlight progress and recent initiatives** undertaken by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to protect women and girls with disabilities from sexual violence – including legal and institutional reforms, new policy measures, or collaboration with civil society and international partners.

3. **Launch advocacy priorities** by outlining and discussing the report's key and actionable recommendations. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Ensuring the provision** of reasonable and procedural accommodations throughout all stages of proceedings, such as physical accessibility, adjusted

language, assistive communication tools, support persons and flexible interview protocols, while recognising that women with disabilities are not a homogeneous group and have diverse needs requiring differentiated support and protection measures.

- **Addressing barriers related to legal capacity** and the right to testify, particularly for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, which continue to prevent women with disabilities from reporting crimes, providing testimony or being considered credible witnesses;
- **Develop comprehensive manuals** on sexual violence and disability for justice sector professionals (including investigators, prosecutors, judges, lawyers, and all other relevant professionals such as medical staff, social workers, crisis centre staff, etc.), applying human rights-based, survivor-centred, gender- and disability-sensitive approaches in line with the CRPD and CEDAW standards. Ensure regular, mandatory training for all relevant professionals based on the developed materials.

4. **Foster dialogue and concrete action** by creating a platform for interactive exchange between civil society actors, UN agencies and government representatives on tangible solutions and commitments to advancing access to justice for women and girls with disabilities in the region.

Moderator: Janette Akhilgova, Equality Now Eurasia Consultant

Agenda

Opening Remarks (5 min): Brief introduction to the CSW70 theme and its relevance for women and girls with disabilities.

Research Presentation (15 min): Equality Now presents key findings from its report, including data on sexual violence against women with disabilities, identified barriers to justice, and the core recommendations for legal and policy reform.

Panel Discussion (45 min): Multi-stakeholder perspectives on tangible solutions and



commitments to advancing access to justice for women and girls with disabilities survivors of sexual violence. The panel includes:

- Government representatives
- Disability Rights advocates
- Legal practitioners
- UN Agencies Representatives

Interactive Q&A (20 min): Open discussion with the audience to engage on recommendations, national contexts, and next steps.

Closing & Call to Action (5 min): Summary of key takeaways and concrete next steps to advance access to justice for women and girls with disabilities survivors of sexual violence.

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