



PERMANENT REPRESENTATION
OF BELGIUM IN NEW YORK



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
SPECIAL PROCEDURES
SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS, INDEPENDENT EXPERTS & WORKING GROUPS



Flanders
State of the Art



International
Labour
Organization



México

Misión Permanente de México ante la
Organización de las Naciones Unidas

Addressing the backlash: Pushing forward to secure sexual, reproductive, health and labour rights

Side event in the context of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Moderated panel debate followed by Q&A session with the audience (75 min)

11 March, 15:00-16:15

New York City, United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 9

Thirty years ago, the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action (BDPfA) marked a watershed moment. It became the world's most comprehensive blueprint for the advancement of the rights and empowerment of women and girls.

Three decades later, the BDPfA remains the most comprehensive global consensus on critical areas and actions for achieving gender equality. Yet, the realisation of its ambition remains out of reach. Poverty remains highly feminised. Women are still underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions. Deeply entrenched gender stereotypes and inequalities continue to shape the roles of both women and men in society and economies. Women continue to fare worse on almost every labour market indicator, including labour force participation and the gender pay and pensions gap, despite significant improvements in the educational attainment of girls and women.

Added to these ongoing challenges is a severe rollback and backlash against the rights of women and girls, threatening the “goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity.”

While sometimes manifesting differently in different contexts, this backlash is seen worldwide in the ever-shrinking civil society space and attacks against women human rights defenders, the rise of anti-rights narratives and laws that restrict or even prevent women and girls' participation in civil, cultural, political, economic and social life, and a continuing pandemic of gender-based violence and harassment, amongst other manifestations. Women and girls who were already being left behind, such as those facing intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion, are being pushed further back. Progress on gender equality, including the elimination of gender stereotypes, is being reversed.

Sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) – including the right to decide if and how many children to have and the right to access confidential, high quality health services which enable women to control their own bodies – are fundamental to reducing gender-based violence and securing women's well-being and their social empowerment. Moreover, when women's sexual and reproductive health rights are fulfilled, and care leave policies and services are provided, they have more opportunities to pursue economic activity and participate effectively in the workplace.

Unfortunately, sexual and reproductive health rights face the fiercest backlash by anti-gender movements. Additionally, education is a central target in anti-gender campaigns, with coordinated effort to dismantle gender and sexuality education programs and restrict parental and children's rights to inclusive learning and educational freedom. To ensure the protection and advancement of women's social and economic rights,

including SRHR and other rights at work, it is essential to implement comprehensive policies, strengthen legal frameworks, remedy the over-representation of women in certain sectors and their under-representation in others, and promote equality of opportunity and treatment at work. This includes access to quality healthcare and social protection, protection against discrimination, fair wages, maternity and paternity benefits, and safe working conditions, all of which contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment. In order to secure SRHR and labour rights of women, these mobilizations require a more adequate reaction and prevention strategies. Resistance and resilience have been the hallmark of women's and allied movements, including the workers' movements. But resistance is not enough. In a rapidly changing world, how do we continue to gain ground on securing sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls? How can we secure conditions for everyone to enjoy comprehensive sexuality education? How can we secure conditions for women and girls to enjoy their rights to equality of opportunity, dignity and economic security? What has proven successful to dismantling structural obstacles to gender equality at work, sexual and reproductive health rights and comprehensive sexuality education, even in the face of hostile environments? What challenges remain and how does that inform future interventions in this area? As we celebrate 30 years of the BDPfA, join us for a critical conversation on pushing forward despite the backlash.

This side event to the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women will be co-organized by the **Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Permanent Representations of Belgium and Mexico to the United Nations in New York.**

The **target group** of the planned panel debate is composed of government and civil society representatives.

Agenda

1. *Opening remarks*
 - Minister Caroline Gennez, Flemish Minister of Welfare and the Fight against Poverty, Culture and Equal Opportunities
2. *Introduction of panelists by the Moderator*
 - Ms. Jemimah Njuki, the Chief of the Economic Empowerment section, UN Women
3. *Panel*
 - Ms. Laura Nyirinkindi, Chair, Working Group on discrimination against women and girls
 - Ms. Emanuela Pozzan, Senior Gender and Non-Discrimination Specialist, International Labour Organization
 - Ambassador Jennifer Feller, Director General for Human Rights and Democracy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
 - Ms. Eefke Deneer, Senior policy advisor, Rutgers
4. *Moderated Q & A with attendees*
5. *Closing remarks*
 - Minister Caroline Gennez, Flemish Minister of Welfare and the Fight against Poverty, Culture and Equal Opportunities

Please [RSVP here](#). Due to limited capacity, we kindly ask all interested participants to sign up and wait for registration confirmation. Please note that not everyone may be able to participate in person. For those who cannot attend in person, the event will be broadcasted on UN Web TV.