CSW67 – SIDE-EVENT RESPONDING TO REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES: PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT, REFUGEE AND ASYLUM-SEEKING WOMEN AND GIRLS

A side-event to the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations, during the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Date: 7 March 2023, 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

Venue: Conference Room 4 - General Assembly Building, United Nations, New York

Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

PRESIDENCY OF ICELAND
Council of Europe 11/2022 – 05/2023
PRÉSIDENCE DE L'ISLANDE
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This side-event will highlight the **challenges and specific needs of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls**, and will outline **the existing legal framework, providing useful guidance**. It will offer an opportunity to exchange on experience and practical solutions to improve the situation of women and girls on the ground, whether in their country of origin, during the journey, or upon arrival.

The war in Ukraine has made it clearer than ever that women and girls are disproportionately affected by crises. The conflict has had a very negative impact on migrant and refugee women, including when it comes to different forms of gender-based violence and human trafficking. The event will therefore explore the whys and hows of **gender-sensitive migration (and other) crisis management**.

Bringing together international partners and relevant civil society representatives, the event will **foster an understanding of how gender aspects intersect with migration,** and will **promote gender equality and human dignity**.

OPENING ADDRESS

▶ **Katrin Jakobsdóttir**, Prime Minister of Iceland

SPEAKERS

▶ **Sergiy Kyslytsya**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations and President of the Executive Board of UN Women

▶ **Iris Luarasi**, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Council of Europe

▶ **Pär Liljert**, Director, International Organization for Migration Office to the United Nations, New York

▶ **Leyla Kayacik**, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees

▶ **Jemimah Njuki**, Chief, Economic Empowerment, UN Women

▶ **Alyssa Ahrabare**, Legal & Advocacy Lead, European Network of Migrant Women

MODERATOR

▶ **Marja Ruotanen**, Director General of Democracy and Human Dignity, Council of Europe

▬▬ According to the **World Migration Report 2022**, there are some **281 million** international migrants leaving their home countries in search of safety or opportunity. Nearly **half of these are women and girls** leaving their homeplace because of conflict. Women and girls also make up a significant proportion of economic migrants worldwide.

▬▬ The migration experience is *not* the same for women and men. The difference is down to existing inequalities in access to resources, professional opportunities, power and education.

▬▬ Whether seeking refuge or asylum, or migrating in search of a better life, women and girls are confronted with the compounded intersecting realities of migration and being female. As a result, they face a combination of stereotypes, sexism, discrimination in various forms, gender-based violence, human trafficking, and other human rights violations. Data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicates that in 2020 approximately 65% of detected human trafficking victims were women and girls. Whether in transit or on arrival, access to necessary health care services - including sexual and reproductive health - is more likely to be an issue for women and girls.

▬▬ Migrant women and girls face unique challenges leading to increased situations of vulnerability. Unaccompanied girls, pregnant women, those with small children or women experiencing intersectional discrimination are particularly at risk.

▬▬ Adequate provision for the fundamental rights and needs of all migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers calls for adopting a **human rights-based and gender-responsive approach**. Migrant women should be empowered to participate fully in social and political life, and to enjoy equal opportunities in the labour market. In practice, services and infrastructures must be transformed so that they are gender-responsive.

▬▬ Ensuring that all women migrants have **access to justice, and that law enforcement officers and the judiciary are adequately trained**, significantly reduces their vulnerabilities, and challenges the culture of impunity in which perpetrators of violence against women and trafficking in human beings believe they will not face punishment. Gender-sensitive asylum policies should also help to ensure that victims of violence against women who are in need of protection fully benefit from the right to **non-refoulement**. The Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine has shone a light on the fact that existing gender inequalities are exacerbated by humanitarian (and other) crises. During the Covid-19 pandemic, women in vulnerable situations, including migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, have faced additional challenges, such as a lack of access to services and a rise in domestic violence, particularly during lockdown periods.

Useful links:

Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023

Council of Europe's Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe for 2021-2025

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)

Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls

Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees

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