



United Kingdom
Mission to the
United Nations



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

CONCEPT NOTE

Halving Violence against Women and Girls in a Decade: Prevention First

70th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Date: Wednesday 11 March, 2026

Time: 11:30- 12:45 (EDT)

Location: UN Building - Conference Room 8

Context

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is not just a national emergency, it's a global one. While we have more laws to prevent VAWG, progress to end VAWG is too slow. According to the UN data hub, globally, nearly [1 in 3 women](#) (840 million) have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Alarmingly, this is now reflected in the online world, a recent Amnesty International UK report revealed that [44%](#) of young women in the UK have faced online misogyny.

The UK Government is turning commitment into action. In December 2025 the British Government published its strategy to build a safer society for women and girls, setting out our ambitions and actions to halve VAWG in a decade. Prevention is a key pillar of this strategy. Internationally, we have also committed to step up our efforts to eliminate VAWG and ensure the multilateral system remains a powerful force for women's rights and gender equality.

South Africa has consistently affirmed its national and global commitment to ending violence against women and children, recognising VAWG as both a human rights violation and a barrier to inclusive development. This commitment is reflected in South Africa's constitutional guarantees, progressive legislative reforms, and a suite of policy and programme interventions—including the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide—which together provide a comprehensive framework for prevention, protection, and systemic response.

As a co-host of this side event with the United Kingdom, South Africa positions prevention at the centre of its approach - alongside legal reform, social norm transformation, and multi-sector collaboration. Through initiatives that champion positive masculinities, strengthen accountability across institutions, and support evidence-based prevention

strategies aligned with UN frameworks, the country continues to work toward creating safe online and offline spaces for all women and children. South Africa's participation reflects its dedication to advancing systemic change, building resilient communities, and contributing to global efforts aimed at halving violence within a decade.

Overview of event:

This event will be a panel discussion, led by the United Kingdom in partnership with the Republic of South Africa to examine the evidenced- based prevention strategies adopted by both countries including championing positive masculinities as a driver for attitudinal change.

The discussion will centre prevention as a core pillar of efforts to halve VAWG within a decade, recognising that legal reform alone is insufficient without sustained action to address structural drivers.

UN Women will highlight its work with Member States to enable VAWG prevention through national action plans and advancing social norm change across sectors like education, media and digital platforms, drawing on the RESPECT framework. Participants will also share ground-breaking research they have conducted in collaboration with Equimundo and the Institute of Strategic Dialogue to examine online misogyny, gendered hate speech, and technology-facilitated VAWG. The Minister of State for Women and Equalities and the UK Special Envoy on Women and Girls will respond to these insights with how the British government is working to prevent VAWG with its new 10-year strategy.

This event will bring together parliamentarians, policy makers, academics and civil society organisations to engage in this important dialogue on emerging evidence, and the policy and legislative frameworks needed to create safe, inclusive, and accountable online and offline spaces for women and girls. It will also highlight promising practices and cross-sector collaboration essential for driving systemic and sustainable social norm change.

Panelists:

- The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith - Minister of State for Women and Equalities Minister- United Kingdom
- The Rt Hon Baroness Hon Harriet Harman, United Kingdom Special Envoy for Women and Girls
- Minister Sindisiwe Lydia Chikunga - Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities - Republic of South Africa
- Kalliopi Mingeirou, Chief Ending Violence against Women and Girls - UN Women
- Gary Barker, President and CEO, Equimundo Center for Masculinities and Social Justice

Key discussion points:

- Overview of UK VAWG strategy What would be needed to halve violence against women in a decade – nationally and globally?
- How can prevention strategies be tailored to ensure they work for *all* women, including those who face disproportionate levels of violence such as disabled women and ethnic minority women?



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- How can we transform our justice systems from reactive to preventative - helping to stop the cycle of misogyny before it escalates into criminal violence?
- In what ways can we engage men and boys not just as allies but as active stakeholders who benefit from dismantling outdated and harmful gender norms?

Running Order

11:30- Welcome & Introductions :Gillian Unsworth (UK Cabinet Office)

11:35- The UK VAWG Strategy: The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister of State for Women and Equalities & The Rt Hon Baroness Harriet Harman, UK Special Envoy for Women and Girls

11:47- The South African Vision: Minister Sindisiwe Lydia Chikunga

11:52- The Global Framework: Kalliopi Mingeirou (UN Women)

11:57- Championing Masculinities: Gary Barker (Equimundo)

12:02- Interactive Q&A: Open Floor

12:43- Closing Remarks: Moderator

12:45- Adjournment