

52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Statement by H.E. Ms Tiina Intelmann,
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Mr Chair,

Firstly, Estonia fully associates itself with the statement made by Slovenia on behalf of the EU earlier at this session and is honoured to offer the following remarks from our national perspective.

This session of the CSW has focused on a number of novel and significant perspectives on gender equality. These discussions have reaffirmed an obvious fact which is, however, often overlooked in the formulation of policies and actions at the national and international level – that the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, in addition to its intrinsic value, is unambiguously linked to achieving development and security. Our fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, tackling climate change and promoting economic development will not yield results, if it does not take into account and address the gender perspective.

Mr Chair,

In recent years, Estonia has stepped up its actions for achieving the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women. One part of these efforts is the development of the relevant legislation, most notably the adoption of the Gender Equality Act which entered into force in 2004. To assist with the implementation and monitoring of Estonia's gender equality commitments, the Act also established an independent institution of the Gender Equality Commissioner.

Moreover, the Gender Equality Act obliges all national and local government institutions to apply the gender mainstreaming strategy. The incorporation of a gender perspective in several of Estonia's key policy documents, for example the Ministry of Social Affairs Strategic Action Plan, the State Budget Strategy and National Employment Action Plans reflect the recent steps for greater gender mainstreaming.

These processes have reaffirmed for us the need for indicators for gender equality, sex-disaggregated and gender-relevant data, as well as the capacity and expertise to analyse it. Gender statistics have a role in the formulation of policies, raising awareness of problems and challenges and the elimination of gender stereotypes, and help to provide an objective basis for policies and actions. In addition to a comprehensive statistical overview on 'Women and Men' from the end of 2006, the efforts to gather and compile better statistics in Estonia include annual statistic publications on specific topics, for example on labour market and pay, which include an analysis from the gender perspective.

In 2008 and 2009, Estonia will conduct a nation-wide official victimisation survey, which for the first time incorporates a separate section on violence against women.

Mr Chair,

The campaign against violence against women launched by the Secretary General at the opening of this session of the Commission underlines the serious and urgent need for more decisive action on this issue at all levels.

At the national level, better research and the compilation of statistics on violence against women have been combined by various government and civil society actions in Estonia in previous years. These include awareness campaigns, establishment of shelters and provision of counselling – a network that still needs to be broadened, but also a national action plan on domestic violence which will enter into force in the course of 2008. The action plan focuses on the development of services to victims, data collection and strengthening the cooperation between national and local government, as well as law enforcement institutions and the civil society. The National Development Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings, 2006-2009, is another part of the efforts to combat violence against women.

The UN system has valuable initiatives to help combat violence against women. We hope that these will be further strengthened by the attention and momentum, which the campaign launched this week can create.

Mr Chair,

Looking farther, support for the promotion of the situation of women is one of the priorities of Estonia's development cooperation strategy. Estonia continues to support the UN funds and programmes which seek to promote the goals of gender equality and the empowerment women, including the UN Development Fund for Women and UN Population Fund. Estonia values highly this cooperation, as well as the insight and experience that the chairmanship of Estonia of the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM has provided of the UN's work as well as the existing challenges in this field.

We are convinced that the responsibility for succeeding in achieving the goal of gender equality lies primarily with the states themselves, as reaffirmed in the Beijing Platform of Action. To effectively support these actions and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, the UN capacity to respond, especially on the ground, needs to be strengthened – including by greater coordination, coherence and ensuring sufficient resources.

Mr Chair,

The priority theme of this year's session of CSW, financing for gender equality, addresses a crucial aspect of the implementation of our commitments with regard to gender equality. The incorporation of the gender perspective in public finance management, including in the design and implementation of budgets, is an essential part of gender mainstreaming. As the inputs from all the participants of this session have shown, there are considerable challenges, but also valuable examples of initiatives in this area, also from the experience of the UN. It is my hope that this Commission provides a strong basis and valuable guidance for further improving financing for gender equality and empowerment of women.

Thank you, Mr Chair.