

**International Women's Day
8 March 2023**

Global and regional experts call for united efforts to preserve hard-fought gains for women's rights

GENEVA/BANJUL/WASHINGTON/STRASBOURG (8 March 2023) – Commemorating International Women's Day, UN and regional expert mechanisms on women's human rights and members of the [EDVAW Platform](#) identified alarming trends and expressed concern at the growing backlash against women's and girls' rights in all spheres of life, calling for united efforts from all actors to preserve hard-fought gains. They issue the following statement:*

We seize this opportunity to raise our voice against the growing backlash against women's and girls' rights in all spheres of life. Global progress towards gender equality has slowed across regions, and targeted rollbacks of women's and girls' legally protected rights have significantly intensified. This trend needs to be reversed, otherwise, gender equality will not be achieved in the next 300 years.

We have witnessed a sharp increase in the violations of the rights of women and girls, compounded by severely restrictive policies that strip women and girls of their autonomy, mobility, education and freedom of expression, as well as the revocation of laws guaranteeing basic rights to bodily autonomy and the erasure of institutions previously established to tackle gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls.

Women and girls are not only victims, but are also drivers of solution. As agents of change, impactful decision-makers, and courageous human rights defenders, they focus on improving livelihoods for everyone, empowering others, and ensuring sustainable development and peace. We call for the creation of a safe and supportive environment for feminist movements and civil society to combat the backlash against women's human rights and to resist all anti-rights trends and movements. We observe how the concept of gender itself has been challenged and misused to further undermine the struggle towards the elimination of discrimination against women and girls and in the direction of gender equality.

We express our deep concern at the violent crackdowns on female protestors, repealing of special laws and measures for the protection of women and girls, criminalisation of women's behaviours and the normalisation of the reliance on sexual harassment and gender-based violence as a tool to discourage opposing views and appeals for transparency and accountability by States and non-State actors alike.

In 2023, we commemorate important landmarks towards women's human rights commitments: the 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and the 20th anniversary of the Maputo Protocol. This year marks also the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. More than ever before, we, the international human rights community must unite and support as well all local efforts to preserve or construct the democratic space. We should block

any position in the international human rights fora that endorses patriarchal and discriminatory norms, misusing culture, religion, and State sovereignty as fallacious justifications.

Pervasive violence against women and girls, visible also in the digital space, should not be tackled as an isolated issue, but as one of the most brutal manifestations of gender-based discrimination and patriarchal oppression.

We encourage States, the international community and all actors to work together to overcome the gender backlash and to prioritise and continue to uphold the fundamental human rights of women and girls across the globe.

*** The experts of the [EDVAW Platform](#): Ms. Dorothy Estrada-Tanck (Chair), Ms. Ivana Radačić (Vice-Chair), Ms. Elizabeth Broderick, Ms. Meskerem Geset Techane and Ms. Melissa Upreti, [Working Group on discrimination against women and girls](#), Ms. Genoveva Tisheva, Chair of the Working Group on Violence against Women of the UN Committee on the Elimination of discrimination against women, [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#), Ms. Marcela Huaita, President of the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention, [Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention](#), Ms. Iris Luarasi, President of the EDVAW Platform and President of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, [Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#); Ms. Janet R. Sallah Njie, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, [African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa](#), Ms. Julissa Mantilla Falcón, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Rapporteur for Women's Rights, [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Rapporteur on the Rights of Women](#)**

The Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW Platform) was launched in March 2018. It comprises seven United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms on violence against women and women's rights operating at the international and regional levels. Independent expert mechanisms play a decisive role in monitoring the implementation of the human rights standards necessary to tackle violence and discrimination against women. Their work provides essential information on the situation of women's rights, on action undertaken to combat violence against women as well as on urgent issues, gaps and shortcomings in the implementation of international standards and government commitments. The Platform aims to strengthen institutional links and thematic co-operation between the mechanisms with a view to working towards harmonised strategies and undertaking joint action. By enhancing collaboration, its goal is to improve the implementation of the existing international legal and policy framework on violence against women and their discrimination.