

Intervention by Sascha Gabizon, WECF International in the closing panel at the UNECE review Beijing+20, Geneva, 7th November 2014

Thank you chair, it is an honour to speak in this session on the way forward, and I would like to thank the chairs and the UNECE for this important session on the Beijing+20 review.

It is of course Pity we will not have a large World Women Conference next year because of the fear to see a role back on women's rights language — it would have been very good to mobilize and engage young women and men from around the world – but this week in Geneva was getting very close to that, we had a strong spirit of Beijing here in the Palais!

We have heard these days many excellent examples of how governments and civil society are taking action to try and implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

Amongst the most important advances are the **many legal steps taking in countries** for gender equality, and also international commitments such as the **Istanbul Convention**.

But we have **seen too little progress in all areas of the Beijing of Platform For Action**, and in some areas roll back.

The **reasons** for this we have heard are many, a.o. **gender stereotypes are persistent**, and **lack of women's economic independence**, worsened by the **financial crisis** in all this region.

The **UN Women Report has shown that not one country** in the world has **achieved gender equality**, and that at this pace we will need another 81 years! That is unacceptable of course.

Looking at the **way forward**:

This region should send a strong message to the world:

- **That we absolutely** want to ensure women's human rights fully!!
- **That it is a shame** for our societies if we are not able to achieve this.
- **And that we therefore will make this a key priority** in all our policy areas; building on the 12 areas of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The **outcome of this meeting** should recommend as next steps:

- 1) All UNECE member states **to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention**, and those **who haven't done so yet, the CEDAW** and its protocols.
- 2) The **translation into national law** of the Beijing PFA and the other international resolutions **including UN Resolution 1325**
- 3) **Implementation** of the **national gender equality legislation**, ensuring human rights for all women and men, including older women, ethnic minorities, migrant and indigenous women, women with disabilities, rural women and LGBTIQ women.
- 4) **Allocate sufficient** public budgets to achieve this implementation

The **budget allocation is the most critical**, which is why this meeting should really come with a **strong message on** how gender equality and women's rights have to **be a priority for the Post-2015** Sustainable Development Goal agenda, and the 3rd Conference on **Financing for Development**, which will be negotiated in 2015 and together will set the **priorities for the Means of Implementation** for spending on development in the coming 15 years.

We should have criteria that **no funding for Post2015 should be given**, unless it has shown that it will help promote gender equality and women's rights.

The outcome of this meeting should say that the **allocation of development budgets should ensure full implementation of gender equality** and women's human rights, **not only** pick out one point here or there.

We cannot have the same as we had for the **MDGs, where the targets for women's health and gender equality were too limited** and not **sufficient human rights** based.

This meeting should support the **stand alone gender goal for Post2015** as has been presented in the SDGs, and in particular the gender goal's strong targets on **ending discrimination, ending violence** with specific reference to **Female Genital Mutilation**, and **ending child and forced marriage**, and on women's **full and equal participation** in decision making, The meeting should also support ensuring gender targets throughout the other goals.

We should also send a message that there are some targets in the SDG Gender goal which have **qualifiers which are in contradiction to human rights**, qualifiers which say "in accordance with national circumstances", and **that these are not acceptable**.

We should welcome the new target that **addresses unpaid care and domestic work**, but send a message that we it should NOT have a reference to national

appropriate, and that is should refer to a redistribution of unpaid work between women and men, and households and the state.

Then, for the UNECE region, we should bring back a target which we lost in the negotiations on the SDGs, namely **to fully involve men and boys in achieving gender equality and breaking down gender stereotypes**, and make sure they understand the benefits this has for men.

Also, we should call for the target on **ensuring sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights to be strengthened**. We should **add sexual rights**, to ensure that women have their full right to control over their bodies, to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

Civil Society will not be able to support the outcome of this meeting if SRHR is not there.

And, this meeting should call for **the inclusion of Comprehensive Sexuality Education**, which is entirely missing in the SDGs. All the evidence and statistics show that countries which have comprehensive sexuality education have much less teenage pregnancies and a later age of first sexual relationship – which contradicts the opponents of CSE who would like us to believe that sexual education will only lead to promiscuity. But they are proven wrong by the facts.

The same goes for **our right to safe and legal abortion**. The statistics show that **countries which have de-criminalized abortion, has much LESS** abortion then countries which have **criminalized** it. I know what I am talking about when I say that **no woman WANTS** an abortion if it is not necessary. Making abortion legal and safe, and ensure comprehensive sexuality education, is the best way of reducing abortions.

Finally, I want to end with specific needs of women in the Eastern European and Central Asian counties.

- 1) We should **sustain the achievement** made already in many of these countries, support their **national gender equality plans**, women's full participation in decision-making and a.o. **introducing quota** systems until we have achieved this, --- not just for national elections, but also **for local elections**
- 2) Sustain their work on ending violence against women and girls, including specific practices such as **bride stealing, honour killings**, early and forced marriage and Female genital mutulation
- 3) Sustain their work on **women's economic empowerment** and entrepreneurship, particularly **of rural women**

- 4) Sustain their **work on increasing rural women's access** to water, sanitation, energy, food security, micro-credit at affordable interest rates
- 5) Provide support to address the **emerging challenges** of **climate** change and **disaster risk** reduction, but also of increasing **fundamentalism**
- 6) And finally, I call on all UNECE member states **not to introduce restrictive NGO** legislation, but to provide support and enabling legislation for Civil Society Organisations so that they can all work on advocating for gender equality and women's rights.

The mobilization this week has shown us that **Beijing is alive and kicking**, and lets make **best use of all the opportunities** provided by next years **combined processes** of the Beijing+20 anniversary and the final negotiations on Post2015 sustainable development goals, **to speed up and ensure that** gender equality and human rights will be fully achieved within the coming 5 to 15 years, and not a year longer!

Thank you