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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women
and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by International Network of Liberal Women and Liberal International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence as a Global Framework

Liberal International welcomes the report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Her Excellency Ms. Rashida Manjoo, on the issue of state responsibility in eliminating violence against women as submitted to the 23rd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. LI aligns fully with the report's conclusions that it is imperative for States to create a dual assessment framework whereby accountability lies not only with the perpetrators of the violence but also with all those who fail to protect and prevent.

Liberal International also welcomes the Special Rapporteur's latest statement to the 58th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women which explicitly notes the gaps within the current international normative framework in respect to preventing, eliminating and punishing violence against women.

This statement would like to pay particular attention to these existing gaps and the urgent necessity for their resolution especially in light of the recent entry into force of the Istanbul Convention on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls.

Recognizing that:

- Violence against women and domestic violence continues to be one of the most wide spread forms of human rights violations
- Violence against women stems from persistent discrimination caused by socially rooted inequality between women and men
- According to a 2013 global review of available data conducted by the World Health Organization, 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence
- Between 15 to 76 per cent of women are targeted for physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime
- Up to 50 per cent of sexual assaults are committed against girls under the age of 16
- Women are particularly susceptible to sexual violence during war and times of conflict
- Approximately 130 million girls and women in the world have experienced female genital mutilation and/or cutting
- Over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18
- There are 102 states that still lack specific legal provisions against domestic violence

Considering that:

- Freedom from violence is the most basic human right, without which all other rights are negated

- The Council of Europe and its Member States resolved to reverse these trends by establishing the Istanbul Convention on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls that entered into force on 1 August 2014

Stressing the fact that the Istanbul Convention:

- Builds on the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and as such codifies all non-legally binding standards contained not only in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women but also in various other international resolutions on the issue
- Proves as the most far-reaching legally binding international instrument addressing violence against women both as a form of discrimination and a human rights violation
- Represents the first international treaty to explicitly contain a definition of gender thus applying a gender perspective in the design and evaluation of measures taken in its implementation
- Forms the first international treaty to provide an all-encompassing definition for domestic violence and violence against women
- Specifically defines all forms of gender-based violence such as psychological violence, stalking, physical violence, sexual violence, including rape, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced abortion, forced sterilization and sexual harassment
- Includes provisions for achieving equality between women and men as the most effective and genuine way of ending and preventing violence against women
- Builds on all other existing international legislation by including specific provisions that aim at changing attitudes and eliminating stereotypes at both the individual and institutional level
- Stipulates for a specific implementation monitoring mechanism whereas other treaties on women's rights including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women do not
- Includes gender-sensitive asylum provisions whereby migrant and refugee women are acknowledged as a particularly vulnerable group thus requiring states to recognize gender-based violence as a ground for asylum
- Addresses domestic violence against men, the elderly and children
- Integrates the “due diligence” standard thereby building on the jurisprudence of the European and Inter-American Court of Human Rights
- Allows for accession by non-Council of Europe Member States

Commending on:

- The ongoing efforts of liberals around the world to eliminate and prevent domestic violence and violence against women such as Mary Robinson, Liberal International Prize for Freedom Laureate and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights who served as the first female President of the Republic of Ireland; Waris Dirie, Liberal International Prize

for Freedom Laureate and former United Nations Special Ambassador for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation practices around the world; British Minister for International Development Lynne Featherstone; the International Network of Liberal Women and many others

Recalling:

- Its Resolution to the 59th Congress in Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2014) on preventing and combatting violence against women through the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe which called on all liberal leaders and parliamentarians to work towards a worldwide Convention as an integral and effective instrument to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women
- Its Written Statement on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls as submitted to the 23rd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council which called on the international community to take responsibility for ensuring that women's rights are enshrined in every United Nations Member State's national legislation and all forms of violence against women and girls are criminalized
- Its Written Statement on the elimination and prevention of female genital mutilation practices around the world as submitted to the 25th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council which called on all United Nations Member States which still allow for female genital cutting to adopt and implement legislation banning this horrible practice and take all necessary legislative, political and operational measures aimed at prevention and abolition

Calls:

- For the universal ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention by all Member States of the Council of Europe as a first step towards the promotion of the regional framework on a global level
- On the United Nations to create a global women rights legal framework to effectively eliminate and prevent all forms of domestic violence and violence against women and girls by incorporating the Istanbul Convention, the Beijing Platform for Action, the conclusions of the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and all other relevant international legislation
- On all United Nations Member States to adopt specific national legislative measures against domestic violence and violence against women and girls
- On the international community to work together with the media in order to promote a positive image of women whereby gender stereotypes that make violence against women acceptable are eradicated
- On the international community to work together with the civil society and political internationals in order to organize educational and awareness-raising campaigns on ending violence against women and girls focusing specifically on preventive measures and incorporating human rights in primary education

Commits:

- For liberal parliamentarians from around the world, whether in government or opposition, to continue to work towards the universal signature, ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention and the extension of its jurisprudence beyond the borders of Europe
- For its liberal member parties to continue to advocate and work towards universal gender equality eliminating social, economic, legal and other barriers towards the empowerment of women around the world
- For its liberal member parties to continue to promote female political participation and leadership from different ethnic and socioeconomic groups including by strengthening the global female parliamentarian network as a way of advancing and securing sensible policies on women's rights on a national and international level
- To engage in extensive dialogue and to support the work of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, United Nations Women and all other relevant United Nations bodies as to help establish an all-encompassing global convention on the elimination and prevention of domestic violence and violence against women

This statement is co-sponsored by the International Network of Liberal Women.
