



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Statement of the European Women's Lobby

57th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

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The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union, working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men, and representing a total of more than 2000 organisations from all countries of the European Union and its candidate countries.

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) would like to recall the **current worrying context for achieving the UN goal of equality between women and men**, with growing attacks on women's rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights, pervasive violation of women's human rights and reduction of funds to address the phenomena in some countries: violence against women and girls is one of the most obvious manifestations of the unequal power relations and of the persistence of patriarchal systems on the planet. In this context, **strong CSW agreed conclusions are urgently needed** to ensure progress on the ground and renewed political commitment on the part of all member states.

The economic downturn should provide the momentum for concrete action, as we cannot afford not to end violence against women, both in terms of financial sustainability but also in terms of global democracy, peace and security for all human beings. All forms of violence against women must be ended, and all women in this planet, taking into consideration their diverse needs and

situations, should be protected and live free from violence, while no perpetrators, whatever the context, should remain unpunished.

We need proactive policies, making commitments a reality: there has been progress since 1995, but we need action beyond words. A first step was reached in Europe with the Council of Europe Convention on combating and preventing violence against women, all governments now must ratify this convention. We have many declarations at European and national levels, but women's organizations on the ground are still waiting for concrete measures: EWL member organisations regularly tell us about the lack of support services, the lack of consistency between the various institutional mechanisms, the lack of prevention and education campaigns, the lack of protection measures for victims, and the persistence of impunity, in a context of growing sexualisation and pornification of the public sphere.

Women in Europe also face a backlash and different waves of antifeminism, and a lack of political courage to address inequalities between women and men. **Europe needs to be mobilised, to defeat the myth that "gender equality has been achieved" and to provide strong leadership in paving the way towards the realisation of women's rights and gender equality.** We must build on the existing good practices, and go beyond their piecemeal nature by developing a European strategy with the highest standards of protection. This CSW should be the moment for forward thinking action, based on concrete commitments. **Women from Europe and the world are waiting and watching.**