

International Helvi Sipilä Seminar 9 March 2023, UN CSW67

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Your Excellencies, Representatives of States, Civil Society and Private Sector,
It is a pleasure to be here to open this 17th International Helvi Sipilä Seminar on women's human rights and technological innovations. I warmly welcome you to this event.

A very big thank you to the Finnish women's organizations for once again organizing a very timely event.

Online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination know no borders. They are a real threat to democracy, threatening women and girls' participation in public life. This global problem requires a multi-stakeholder response.

Online gender-based violence must be included in all work against gender-based violence. Online gender-based violence is one of the ways gender-based violence manifests itself. In this context, specific attention needs to be paid to the fact that certain women and girls, such as journalists, politicians and human rights defenders are especially targeted. Women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, for example due to disability, are also at heightened risk for violence and discrimination, both online and offline.

In Finland, we are taking concrete measures to ensure that national legislation and policies on the prevention of gender-based violence also apply online.

Let me share a few examples of our concrete efforts:

First, the national Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women covers digital violence for the first time. Concrete measures include, for example, training of relevant public officers, such as police officers, prosecutors, and judges; a social media campaign for young people; and a project for Finnish game studios with a focus on gender stereotypes and gender-based violence in video games.

Second, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare has developed an online training module on online gender-based violence. The training is open to everyone but is especially directed to experts in social services, health care and the police. The training contributes to recognizing and countering online gender-based violence, supporting those who have experienced it, as well as enhancing multi-stakeholder cooperation to tackle the problem.

Third, the Finnish Criminal Code was amended so that the punishment may be increased if the offence is motivated by the victim's gender. The grounds for increasing the punishment laid down in the Criminal Code apply to all offences. The objective is to combat hate speech targeted especially at women.

Finland is committed to advocating the prevention and elimination of online gender-based violence in all relevant international fora.

International cooperation and action is urgent. Within the UN Women led Generation Equality process, Finland co-leads the Action Coalition on Technology and Innovations for Gender Equality. With multi-stakeholder cooperation and measurable goals, Generation Equality is currently the biggest effort in enhancing gender equality globally.

Finland is committed to advancing all of the four global targets defined by the Action Coalition.

These include:

first, bridging the gender gap in digital access and competences, second, investing in feminist technologies and innovation, third, building new inclusive innovation ecosystems, and, lastly, as Finland's priority, preventing and eliminating online and tech-facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination.

It is at the same time important to be mindful of the possibilities that technology brings. Technology may facilitate violence, harassment, stalking and other forms of abuse. However, when designed and used responsibly, it has the potential to enable participation of a vast number of communities and across distances. Technology can also serve the survivors of violence by providing them accessible support services.

Lasting change can be achieved only through multi-stakeholder collaboration. Thank you for being here today to find together solutions on how to empower women's and girls' safe and equal access to internet and technological innovations, everywhere.