



General Assembly
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Third Committee

Agenda Item 28:
Advancement of women

H.E. Ms. Tine Mørch Smith
Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative

Chair,

Last week, a 14-year-old girl, Malala Yousafzai, was shot and nearly killed. Her crime? She wanted to go to school. She advocated every girl's right to education.

Across the world, women and girls are still being denied the most basic of rights. And in standing up for them, they risk their health and lives.

Chair,

Most of the violence committed against women takes place in the home, which should be the safest place of all. It is inflicted by those who are closest to the victims: their parents, spouses and family members.

Many people consider violence at home to be a private matter. But let us be clear: violence against women is a crime. And it must be treated as such.

The root of the problem is gender inequality. Violence produces - and over generations - reproduces gender inequality. Recent research shows that there is a negative connection between the level of gender equality in a family and the level of violence. This is also true

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of society as a whole. Women must be empowered in order to end this social injustice. And men and boys must be part of the solution.

Chair,

Norway strongly welcomes the fact that violence against women and children is at the top of the agenda at this year's General Assembly.

We commend the Secretary-General for his reports on this subject and applaud the activities that have been initiated to eliminating violence and empower women.

Chair,

Ending violence of this kind is a moral imperative, as is promoting gender equality. Both women and men have the right to a life free from violence. But violence is also a contributing factor to poverty and lack of development, for families, communities and entire countries.

Gender equality is crucial for the sustainable development of any country. We know this from our own experience.

Women, irrespective of race, sexual orientation or whether or not they have a disability must be empowered to make full use of their potential. It is the only way to reach our common goal of sustainable poverty reduction. Norway will work actively to ensure that women's rights and gender equality are a central part of the post-2015 agenda.

Chair,

Norway will strive to protect the rights that women have gained over the past decades; rights and principles that member states – with very few exceptions – have agreed on.

Sexual and reproductive rights of women and young people are particularly important. These rights are not only fundamental rights in themselves. They are also central to sustainable development. We need to strengthen our common efforts to safeguard these rights, not weaken them.

Chair,

We know that millions of women, especially poor women in rural areas, do not have the freedom to control their own reproductive lives and health, and have limited access to basic reproductive health services.

As a result, over a quarter of a million women die each year from pregnancy-related causes. This is a tragedy and a grave social injustice.

Many of these “women” are in fact children. Many girls marry and become pregnant far too early. Early marriage and childbearing not only involve health risks. They are impediments to education and employment, and to economic and political freedom.

Chair,

Courageous human rights defenders who stand up for women’s rights face violence and abuse. According to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, gender-related killings are on the rise. They continue to be accepted, tolerated and justified. Women are killed by their intimate partners. They are killed for dowry, or because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. They are killed or in order to protect the family’s or community’s notions of honour, or because they stand up and defend human rights. States have the responsibility to prevent these crimes and prosecute the perpetrators.

Chair,

Our common commitment to safeguarding women’s human rights must not be undermined by those who fear progress. The coming session of the Commission on the Status of Women, focusing on violence against women, will be an opportunity to join forces and demonstrate our commitment to guarantee women’s fundamental rights and freedom.

The freedom to decide over one’s own body.

The freedom to choose when to have children and when not to.

The freedom to have a life free from the fear of violence.

The freedom to contribute to the sustainable development of society.

By maintaining our commitment to promoting and safeguarding the human rights of all – both women and men, regardless of age, race, disability or sexual orientation – we can turn the challenges into opportunities.

Thank you.