

Report

VIII Conference on Femicide / Femicide

The Duty of Due Diligence in Eradicating Femicide / Femicide

Two years of EU-CELAC Bi-Regional Dialogue on Gender Issues: What are the Improvements?

1st and 2nd of June 2015, Brussels

Introduction

Femicide/femicide is “*the violent death of women based on gender, whether it occurs within the family, a domestic partnership, or any other interpersonal relationship; in the community, by any person, or when it is perpetrated or tolerated by the state or its agents, by act or omission*” (Follow-Up Mechanism of the Convention of Belém do Pará (MESECVI), 2008). It is the most extreme form of violence against women. It is not a matter of “*...isolated incidents that arise suddenly and unexpectedly, but rather the ultimate act of violence which is experienced in a continuum of violence*”¹ against women.

The 8th Conference on Femicide/Femicide: *The Duty of Due Diligence to Eradicate Femicide*², which took place shortly before the Summit of the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (EU-CELAC Summit)³, examined the different aspects of the concept of due diligence and how it is reflected in actions taken by states in regards to issues surrounding violence against women and femicide. It aimed to raise a clear question: What has been done in the framework of the EU-CELAC since the introduction in the Action Plan 2013-2015 of a Bi-Regional Dialogue on gender issues? And what have been the improvements achieved by the countries in the past two years?

To fight against it, more than a dozen Latin American countries have adopted laws that specifically penalize femicide or femicide. European countries also rely on increasingly specific legal instruments to combat violence against women. Twenty years since the Belém do Pará Convention⁴ in Latin America and the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention⁵ in Europe demonstrate an increasingly strong international commitment against this kind of violence, a commitment which has also been recently expressed in the establishment of the EU-CELAC Bi-Regional Dialogue on Gender Issues.

However, legal norms, agreements, and international dialogues alone are not sufficient for the eradication of violence against women, nor is its most extreme manifestation, femicide. It is necessary that the whole of the state structure commit itself to act with due diligence to prevent, investigate, sanction all acts

¹ 1 Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/A.HRC.20.16_En.pdf

² The 8th Conference on Femicide was organized by the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung and Ernest Urtasun and Ulrike Lunacek of the Greens / EFA Group in the European Parliament, in cooperation with AIETI, Alianza por la Solidaridad, Copperacció, CIFCA, European Women’s Lobby, Femicidio.net, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, Grupo Sur, and Otro Tiempo.

³ The II EU-CELAC Summit, “Shaping our common future: working together for prosperous, cohesive and sustainable societies for our citizens”, was held in Brussels on the 10th and 11th of June 2015. To view the resulting documents, including the action plan, access the following link: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/06/11-eu-celac-summit-brussels-declaration/>.

⁴ Belém do Pará Convention: <http://oas.org/en/mesecv/docs/BelemDoPara-ENGLISH.pdf>.

⁵ Istanbul Convention: Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

of violence against women, as indicated in Belém do Pará and Istanbul, as well as to compensate the victims.

Femicide is often a consequence of lack of due diligence in the actions taken by states; such is the case when, for example, public policy, carried out by bodies charged with the implementation of the law, such as the police force or the judicial system, are ineffective or passive in cases of violence against women.

Ernest Urtasun, Member of the European Parliament expressed, that even though significant advances have been made towards the fight against gender based violence, there is still a long way to go before eradicating femicide and impunity on femicide. An EU study on violence against women shows that one out of three women has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. In France, the protection orders are issued only 26 days after the violence act is reported, which is too long. In the UK, in 2014, in only one single day, assistance was denied to 111 women and children because of a lack of space in the shelters for victims of violence. In Chile, a high percentage of women who were killed between 2011 and 2012 had already reported being victims of gender based violence. Those figures demonstrate how violence against women is a shared challenge between the EU and Latin America and how both regions should acknowledge the fact that the issue has not yet been resolved.

The 8th conference on femicide “*The Duty of Due Diligence in Eradicating Femicide / Femicide*” was structured around the following themes:

- a) Due diligence addressed from an international perspective, including strategies, initiatives, and tools that are being developed in the EU and Latin American (LA) spheres;
- b) A national perspective on due diligence centred on means of protection, attention to health, social services, preventive campaigns, problems related to investigations and judicial processes, as well as sanctions in the face of violence against women and femicide.

PANEL I

Towards the eradication of femicide in Latin America and Europe: An international perspective⁶

The Ambassador of Argentina to the European Union (EU), **Hernan Lorenzino**, considers that the Argentinean authorities have been able to bring about big advances in the fight against VAW (violence against women). For example, the programme of retirement has been revised in order for housewives to be able to claim retirement benefits. This kind of specific public policies is essential in order for international agreements, conventions and commitments to materialize.

The 2013-2014 Action Plan adopted at the 1st EU-CELAC Summit⁷ in January 2013 includes a chapter on gender that establishes the creation of a bi-regional dialogue. One of its priorities is to facilitate the cooperation among regions and countries on policies aiming at establishing and/or strengthening gender equality.

According to experts that participated in the workshop on femicide organised by the Bi-Regional Dialogue (Buenos Aires, November 2013), gender violence against women was traditionally dealt with by the domestic environment, e.g. as a private issue. Today, however, gender violence has become a public issue in various regions of the world. Nevertheless, femicide tends to not be labelled as gender violence.

⁶ Chair: **Ernest Urtasun**, Member of the European Parliament, Greens / EFA.

Panelists: **Hernán Lorenzino**, Ambassador to the European Union, Embassy of Argentina, **Nicola Murray**, EEAS, Regional Affairs Division, External Action Service Americas Department, **Maria Noichl**, Member of the European Parliament, S & D, **Luz Patricia Mejía**, MESECVI Coordinator of the Technical Secretariat, Organization of American States (OAS).

⁷ The 1st EU-CELAC Summit brought together European, Latin American and Caribbean Heads of State and Government.

According to Hernan Lorenzino, awareness about gender violence still needs to be raised all around the world. Active participation of the civil society is essential, and we need to find further ways to put the gender violence issue on the public agenda. One way would be to include the eradication of VAW in the Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030.

Nicola Murray, from the Regional Affairs Division in the European External Action Service's Americas Department (EEAS), stated that in the context of the follow-up to the Santiago Summit, the EU-CELAC Action Plan and the Bi-Regional Dialogue on Gender, the EU and CELAC have been cooperating to take concrete actions and support organisations and entities working on the ground to tackle violence against women.

In this context, the EU has been prioritizing the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. Even though the EU is not always able to show clear results yet, many concrete examples of EU-action can be identified.

For example, a EU-Chile dialogue on gender has been established⁸ and Chile plans to set up a Ministry of Women. Peru and the EU had a technical meeting about gender violence. In Caracas, Venezuela, the EU Delegation hosted a photography exhibition called “Women and men – gender equality”. In Honduras, EU funding has been provided to support the Honduran Supreme Court of Justice and monitor the implementation of Honduran laws for prevention of VAW. In Brasil, the EU Delegation took part in an international seminar on sharing practices and knowledge on women’s security. In Barbados, the EU Delegation works with the local authorities and civil society organizations to tackle domestic violence.

At a regional level, the programme EUROsociAL has assisted the CELAC countries in the development and implementation of specific instruments and policies to fight against gender violence and support the protection of vulnerable women.

In her conclusion, Nicola Murray stated that the EU and CELAC have undertaken important actions to implement the different components of the gender section of the Action Plan. However, there is still a lot to achieve, as for example the creation of an intergovernmental biregional working group.

Gender violence has clearly been identified as one of the top priorities at the national and international level and the EU has endeavoured to take actions and establish dialogues and frameworks with different regions of the world. The EU is not spared by the issue of gender violence, says **Maria Noichl**, member of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament. While the EU-CELAC Bi-Regional dialogue supports action against gender violence in Latin America, the EU also developed strategies to fight VAW in Europe.

Maria Noichl presented the Parliament’s report on the EU Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men 2010-2015⁹. The report consists in assessing the concrete effects of the EU-Strategy and making recommendations for the future.

The Strategy shows several challenges in the fight against gender violence: There are many factors that define the living situation of women. They need to be tackled in order to properly define gender violence. Poverty of women is one of them: Women are still unevenly paid in relation to men. It is necessary to achieve transparency of wages in order to expose women’s disadvantage and ultimately to remove this inequality. Furthermore, the financial crisis that has struck our countries led to high unemployment rates among young people, which reinforced poverty and had a real impact on women. There is also a lack of women’s participation in decision-making processes, be it in the private sphere as well as in the political

⁸ This decision was made at the 6th Meeting of the EU-Chile Association Council in Brussels (April 2015).

⁹ The EU Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 is founded on the “Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010” and on the European Pact for Gender Equality. It is the translation into action of the Women’s Charter adopted by the EU-Commission in March 2010 aimed at strengthening gender equality in its policies. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/strategy_equality_women_men_en.pdf

sphere, or at the top level of big companies, and this is the case in all European countries. All this contributes to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes that inevitably stand in women's ways.

Having in mind the challenges listed above, we hope that the year 2016 will tackle gender violence by revealing the social, cultural, judicial, socio-political and other reasons of gender violence.

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, the Belém do Pará Convention¹⁰ and its effects also need to be assessed. This was affirmed by **Luz Patricia Mejía**, coordinator of the Follow-Up Mechanism to the Belém do Para Convention (MESECI) that monitors the implementation of the Convention.

During the first ten years after the signature of the Convention, different pieces of legislation on gender violence were approved in various countries in LA. However, those laws focused on the protection of family, not specifically on the protection of women.

The MESECVI Evaluation Follow-up Mechanism¹¹ that was created after the 10th anniversary of the Convention of Belem do Para aims at highlighting the progress that has been made in the fight of gender violence. On the basis of this mechanism, a diagnosis was set for the five first years of the implementation. This diagnosis enabled the setting up of **six indicators of the implementation of the Convention** or of the monitoring of public policies: legislation, access to justice, specialized services for women victims of violence, statistical information, national plans and budget.

Via those indicators, it was found that 29 out of the 32 states that signed the Convention have elaborated and implemented specific protective legislation. Thanks to the same indicators, the eventual malfunctioning of the legislations was shown. For example, they revealed a huge gap between the sanctions of gender violence and the support provided to the victims. There is also a lack of statistical data, especially comparative data that would allow us to have a thorough overview of the current situation. In addition, internal dialogue in the national states between the authorities and the units responsible for implementing the legislation is still insufficient.

The indicators still need to be implemented deeper into the mechanisms and the authorities need to adapt to this new system as signing such a Convention demands, in addition to the setting up of specific legislation, commitment and action not only from the executive power, but also from the different actors of the civil society.

To conclude this section, Luz Patricia Mejia stated that the Bi-Regional meetings can only be effective if the two regions know that they have to learn from one another. It is not only about agreements and directives; it is about recognizing the challenges and gaps and implementing legitimate policies using key indicators that will allow us to assess and concretely improve the situation in the field.

PANEL II

Promising practices for the eradication of femicide at the national level¹²

According to **Maya Alvarado**, Director of Unión Nacional de Mujeres de Guatemala (UNAMG)¹³, it is difficult to determine and understand “promising practices” for the eradication of femicide put in place at the national level. Each country, with its own specific situation, creates and integrates these practices in a particular way. High levels of impunity, corruption, and a general disregard for human rights, especially

¹⁰ Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women “Convention of Belém do Pará”, 1995. More information on: <http://oas.org/en/mesecvi/docs/BelemDoPara-ENGLISH.pdf>

¹¹ MESECVI: <http://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/about.asp>

¹² Chair: **Ulrike Lunacek**, Vice-president of the European Parliament, Group of the Greens / EFA.

Panelists: **Maya Alvarado**, Executive Director, Unión Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas (UNAMG), **Encarna Boledón González**, Director, Research group Antígona, Barcelona Autonomous University, **Mónica Maureira**, professor and feminist activist, Diego Portales University.

¹³ UNAMG, Only in Spanish : <http://unamg.org/>

women's rights, hinder the establishment of political and social practices for the eradication of femicide in both Europe and Latin America.

In a multicultural and multilingual country like Guatemala, even after eighteen years of peace agreements¹⁴, sexist, racist, and martial practices continue. Violence and intimidation by the State are a major problem in Guatemala. Organized crime groups reach the highest spheres of the State, operating with relative impunity. For many years, civil society organizations (CSOs), women's groups, and feminists have denounced the corruption of the State, as it prevents and impedes the necessary implementation of legislation and mobilization of actors to eradicate femicide.

The Guatemalan State has advanced the formal legal frameworks that guarantee, or better said, should guarantee, women a life free of violence (such as the CEDAW¹⁵, which was ratified in Guatemala in 1982). Furthermore, Guatemala adopted the 2008 Law against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women, established specialized jurisdictional bodies in the Supreme Court, and created a Specialized Prosecutor's Office for women. Nonetheless, Guatemalan women continue to face violence on a day-to-day basis. This is especially true for indigenous women, the majority of the population, who are not only victims of sexism, but also of racism.

In Guatemala, despite the existence of a specific femicide law, many of the laws and policies created to combat femicide are ineffective. While many cases of corruption have been unveiled by the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)¹⁶, Guatemala remains one of the countries with the highest rates of impunity. In more than 9 out of 10 cases of reported rape or sexual assault, perpetrators go unpunished.¹⁷

But in Maya Alvarado's opinion, understanding this phenomenon does not only involve numbers and statistics. The causes of this issue remain intact. Violence against women has become a mechanism of social control that impedes women as citizens and that is legitimized by authoritarian and fundamentalist logic that limits the exercise of the rights and liberties of women. The discrimination of women is deeply imbedded in the social fabric of Guatemalan society, as figures on poverty, death of children from malnutrition, illiteracy, and other socio-economic indicators are comprised mainly by women.

The highest levels of state government continue to deny the genocide against indigenous peoples. However, sexual violence, torture and mutilation that women are currently suffering constitute genocide. Activists defending women's human rights, including indigenous women who defend their rights as women and as indigenous peoples, continue to face threats and attacks from the government.

Despite extreme conditions and circumstances, social actors have driven and pushed policy frameworks within the women's movement and other social movements. There has been progress at this level, but when it comes to apply the laws and policies, the state doesn't provide the necessary funds for implementation.

It thus becomes clear that existing specific national laws will not be effective as long as gender and sexual discrimination remains tolerated within the social and political culture.

As **Encarna Bodelón González** Director of the investigation group Antígona, University of Barcelona, mentions it, the Spanish Comprehensive Law against gender-based violence¹⁸ that was created in 2004 is interesting as it was triggered not by a small number of intellectuals and politicians, but by the

¹⁴ Guatemala's civil war began in 1960. Peace accords were signed in December 1996.

¹⁵ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>.

¹⁶ The CICIG was created in December 2006. It is an independent body charged with supporting the criminal justice system in the investigation and prosecution of crimes in Guatemala. "Mandate," *International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala*, <http://www.cicig.org/index.php?page=mandate>.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch World Report 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/guatemala>.

¹⁸ Only in Spanish : http://noticias.juridicas.com/base_datos/Admin/lo1-2004.tp.html

The law foresees the creation of courts to deal with gender violence issues, rehabilitation centres, assistance to victims and protection mechanisms. <http://www.ipsnews.net/2004/12/rights-spain-has-new-law-on-domestic-violence/>

intervention of feminist movements. Although the legislation did not fully meet their exact demands, a serious step was taken by the State in the acknowledgement of gender violence in Spain. Furthermore, the local governments were also key actors in its implementation. Thanks to feminist movements, professionals and women who experienced gender violence worked together and succeeded in setting up very successful practices in the prevention of and protection from gender violence in the different Spanish regions.

Furthermore, the civil society pushed for the inclusion of the gender perspective into the State Law. Even though legal actors considered it as unconstitutional, the Spanish Constitutional Court eventually confirmed that the integration of the gender perspective into the legislation was constitutional.

Although Spanish legislation on gender violence is a huge step forward in the fight against VAW, it still is burdened with weaknesses:

- The law does not take into account the diversity of gender violence. Therefore, the statistical data is limited as it only considers the murders of women in the framework of a domestic relationship. When murders outside the relationship are taken into account, the number of murders of women doubles.
- The same goes for the diversity of sexual violence. Genital mutilation is for example often excluded from sexual violence data. Given that many forms of sexual violence are not considered as gender violence, women who are victims of those forms of violence often cannot have access to justice and it is difficult to know the exact number of women who are victims of gender violence.
- The Courts and legal workers responsible for the application of the specific legislation on gender violence are inadequately trained, as Spanish law schools offer trainings that are too much based on the support of the bureaucracy, of a state ruled by men, which does not raise awareness on issues related to gender violence.
- Furthermore, even though special mechanisms of support on public policies were included in the legislation, many of those mechanisms cannot be activated as a result of budget cuts decided by the authorities.
- The 2004 legislation intended to give feminist organisations and women the chance to take part in institutional decisions, but today they merely have a consultative status, which slows down the enhancement of the legislation and its adjustment to the current situation.

In her final words, with regard to Spain's contribution to the EU-CELAC dialogue, Encarna Bodelón González strongly emphasized on Spain's necessity to first assess its mistakes and its legislative flaws, and then learn from what other European and Latin American countries have done to fight VAW. Once Spain has achieved this, the country will be able to contribute to the Bi-Regional Dialogue by enhancing the visibility of gender-based violence and femicide in Europe.

Mónica Maureira, professor, journalist and feminist activist, had the opportunity to put forward communication strategies to better inform on VAW in Chile and to present if and how those strategies can be used by other states.

By definition, the press triggers social discussion and enables the society to discuss actions taken by the state. Unfortunately, lots of examples show us how some issues are excluded from the press and how articles do not reflect the reality of the situation. This is the case when it comes to violence against women: we are facing a natural discrimination of VAW in the press.

According to Monica Maureira, feminist movements are facing a real challenge when it comes to working with the press and making sure they sanction VAW. By way of example, in November 2013, the national Chilean newspapers entitled the article of its first page "*The sad confession of the murderer*", when it was in fact an article about a femicide. With the use of this language in the title, the newspaper is neither

getting the attention of the public nor the authorities for the actual murder, but distorts the nature of the event and minimizes the feminicide.

The “strategy for sensitisation of the media professionals about violence against women” supported by the EU¹⁹ aims not only at raising awareness about gender violence via the media, but also to develop strategies in cooperation with the media in order to have an impact on the policy-making systems. This strategy has been successful in Chile so far as meetings with representatives of the media permitted the setting up of collaboration with women’s organisations to discuss women’s rights. The benefit for the media is that they have other sources of information than the victims’ families or the neighbours, e.g. experts and professionals from women’s organisations. More importantly, students in journalism should be provided an adequate training, just as women who work in the media should be coached in order to condemn the actual situation in which women are, at least in Latin America, not part of the decision-making processes.

By way of conclusion, Monica Moreira asserted that in order for CSOs and feminist movements to participate actively in the discussion, it is time to create debate forums in order to find the common flaws and common objectives of the EU and CELAC instead of discussing the differences between the two regions. It is a common fight and we should set common intervention mechanisms and launch a general movement to fight violence against women.

PANEL III

Follow-up Mechanism of the Convention of Belém do Pará (MESECVI)²⁰, and the Istanbul Convention (GREVIO)²¹

Luz Patricia Mejía considers that it is valuable to share the experience of this mechanism due to the fact that civil society participated in that process and that the colleagues who are carrying out the challenge of implementing the Istanbul Convention (GREVIO)²² can learn from it.

Ten years after the creation of the Convention, the evaluation which was carried out showed that the Convention had neither had the expected effect, nor the desired results. On the contrary, the impression from the feminist groups was that the violence increased and that each time there was less clarity in the records of violence experienced by thousands of women. Therefore, it was suggested that the Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) should facilitate how the violence is measured and allow the monitoring of the decrease (or increase) of violence against women in the region.

This is a primary large difference between this convention and the Istanbul Convention which, from the very beginning, has been creating a follow-up mechanism. It is in this way that Europe will have the opportunity to continually create and measure the implementation of their Convention.

The MESECVI has a Technical Secretariat which is within the Organization of American States (OAS) and which belongs to the Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Women’s Commission. The Secretariat is the link between the authorities of the States Parties to the Convention and a Committee of Independent Female/Male Experts. The role of the impartial Committee of Experts, whose members are

¹⁹ „Estrategias para la sensibilización de los medios de comunicación frente al feminicidio y la violencia contra las mujeres“

²⁰ MESECVI : <http://www.oas.org/es/mesecvi/>

²¹ Chair: Klaus Linsenmeier, Director, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, European Union.

Panelists: **Luz Patricia Mejía**, MESECVI Coordinator of the Technical Secretariat, Organization of American States (OAS),), **Johan Friestedt**, Administrator, Secretariat of the Istanbul Convention monitoring mechanism, Council of Europe..

Commentators: **Pierrette Pape**, Policy and Campaigns Director, European Women’s Lobby, **Liz Meléndez**, Director, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán.

²² Istanbul Convention : <http://www.msssi.gob.es/ssi/igualdadOportunidades/internacional/consejoeu/CAHVIO.pdf>

appointed by the States Parties, is to adopt the questionnaire which initiates each round of multilateral evaluation, to analyse the responses from the national reports, and to prepare the recommendations.

The role of the Authorities Conference of the States Parties is to discuss the national reports and the recommendations as well as to adopt the Hemispheric Report. This committee is made up of female/male ministers, high officials or representatives from other organisations responsible for the issue. Presently, all of the representatives are female ministers.

As for the participation of civil society in the follow-up, requirements were defined in order for the NGOs or women's organisations to participate in the large protection systems of women's rights. The consequence was that only the largest NGOs with the greatest resources signed up, while small ones remained without access to the mechanism programmes. Thanks to a system of solidarity, the unregistered NGOs could send their reports through the registered ones.

The issue of representation of CSOs is also fundamental for the Istanbul Convention since it is civil society which can exercise social control. It is important that women's and feminist organisations embrace the Istanbul Convention and that they do not feel that it is an external organisation.

During the first 5 years of the Belém do Pará Convention, the majority of experts were very committed since they were women from the feminist or the human rights movement. When reports started to be released which did not favour the states, several of those states withdrew the independent experts, and appointed representatives of the government, creating tensions with the NGOs. According to Luz Mejía, this problem was overcome by ensuring that the states were obligated to accept that the expert appointed as representative to the Committee of Experts would stay for a whole round of evaluation and monitoring. In this way, the experts remain even when there is a change in government. This is interesting for the Istanbul Convention mechanism.

The rounds of evaluation start when the Committee of Experts (CEBI) sends a questionnaire to the national authorities. In the first few years of the Belém do Pará Convention, the Executive Power responded to the questionnaires of the mechanism, which consisted of very precise questions. With the structuring of the process of MESECVI indicators the procedure became more complex. Currently, the questions aim at identifying if changes have been produced in relation to the six identified indicators²³ and how public policies have had an impact on VaW. The responses require information from the different state bodies, such as the Judicial Power, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, research institutes, the Prosecution and other actors.

Based on the responses from the states, the Committee of Experts produces a preliminary report and sends it to the state and to the registered NGOs who produce a new report, separately. Sometimes those two reports are very different, so the Committee of Experts analyzes them with care.

Afterwards the experts approve the report and resend it to the Conference of States Parties. The reports are published on the website. The second phase of this process is to make recommendations on a hemispheric level and some recommendations specific to each country.

Finally, in the monitoring phase of the recommendations, the questionnaire is sent back to the states with specific questions for each state based on the indicators. These seek to find out if the recommendations are being implemented. Today, all this information is public and allows the NGOs to observe the recommendations provided and review the actions that the state says it is taking.

Johan Friestedt, who is responsible for the Follow-up Mechanism of the Istanbul Convention at the Violence against Women Division of the Council of Europe, explained that the Istanbul Convention is

²³ These are: legislation, access to the justice system, specialised services for women who are victims of violence, statistical information, national plans and budget

similar to the Convention of Belém do Pará and tries to build on its experience and learn from its shortcomings.

The Istanbul Convention came into force on August 1st, 2014, almost three years after it was signed. The Convention is now considered to be the most far-reaching legally-binding instrument in the field of violence against women and is based on the so-called “four-Ps” approach: Policies that are integrated, Prevention of all forms of violence, Protection of victims, Prosecution of perpetrators. In 2015, the Convention’s monitoring mechanism was put in place. It is based on two distinct but interacting bodies:

- An independent monitoring body, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO); and
- A political follow-up body, the Committee of the Parties composed of a representative for each state.

On May 4th 2015, the Committee of the Parties met for the first time. Its task was to elect the first ten members of GREVIO. Ten candidates from different professional backgrounds (judges, prosecutors, academics or members of CSOs) were elected to make up a multi-disciplinary team of independent experts. Five additional members will be elected after the 25th ratification of the Convention.

GREVIO is not entitled to receive or decide on individual complaints submitted by individual victims. The Istanbul Convention does not aim to overlap with the European Convention on Human Rights and its European Court of Human Rights, which is the only body within the Council of Europe that can deal with such complaints. However, citizens can share their experiences or concerns with GREVIO in order for the experts to use this information in the context of future monitoring activities.

In fact, to a great extent, GREVIO will help States Parties to avoid being found in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. It will work within the framework of two monitoring procedures: a country-by-country evaluation procedure and a special inquiry procedure.

The evaluation procedure consists in carrying out a questionnaire aimed at offering guidance to States Parties when drafting their reports on the action they took or are taking to implement the various provisions of the Convention.

During this initial phase, GREVIO will welcome any information from NGOs and other civil society actors which are of relevance to its work. The civil CSOs are expressly referred to in the Convention as being among GREVIO’s sources of information (via alternative/shadow reports).

The experts are free to decide which action is needed to gain sufficient information for the drawing-up of their evaluation reports during the initial phase or during subsequent evaluations. In this context, GREVIO may organise visits to States Parties in order to look into the situation on the ground and meet with public officials as well as representatives of CSOs.

GREVIO will adopt its own reports following a phase of dialogue with the authorities. GREVIO’s reports will be published and sent to the Committee of the Parties, which may adopt recommendations on the basis of the experts’ reports. The Committee of the Parties committed itself to supervise the implementation of these recommendations. As a result, any information from CSOs on progress or lack of progress in the implementation of these recommendations will undoubtedly be of great value to the Committee of the Parties.

In exceptional situations and when preventive action is needed, GREVIO may also resort to a special inquiry procedure. Before triggering it, the experts will assess as to whether the information they receive is reliable and if it points to a situation indicative of large-scale or serious violations of the Convention.

In conclusion, Johan Friestedt stated that the Istanbul Convention monitoring mechanism has the potential of becoming a powerful tool to prevent and combat violence against women. However, there are also many challenges ahead. The comprehensive nature of the Convention may generate huge difficulties for GREVIO, the States Parties and the CSOs when it comes to monitoring its implementation. Moreover, international, national and local NGOs need to co-ordinate their work on reporting to GREVIO and the Committee of the Parties in order to get their messages and concerns through. The Istanbul Convention monitoring mechanism will definitely learn a lot from the experience of the Belém do Pará Convention monitoring in this respect and GREVIO will certainly seek to interact with the civil society and NGOs in order for it to get as much information about the situation on the ground as possible.

Liz Meléndez, Director of the Centre of the Peruvian Woman Flora Tristán,²⁴ representative of Cladem Regional²⁵ and Pierrette Pape, Director of Policies and Campaigns for the European Women's Lobby²⁶ were invited to comment on the two Conventions from the perspective of the organisations of civil society.

The European Women's Lobby has an observatory of experts in the field of violence against women that meets every year to investigate and draft shadow reports. For example, the experts have drafted a barometer on national action plans in the different EU members which enabled to show the gap between the members who insure they're taking actions and NGOs who claim that the laws are not truly being implemented.

According to **Pierrette Pape**, Policy and Campaigns Director, European Women's Lobby, the challenge for the European Women's Lobby, as well as for other CSOs, is to be actively involved. Unfortunately, it is not always possible, as some states choose not to involve the civil society in its processes and do not acknowledge the role of women's organisations. After the election of the ten first experts of GREVIO, the European Women's Lobby's experts revealed that there was a huge lack of transparency in some member states, as they did not respect the Council's requirements for the selection of candidates at national level and chose not to inform the NGOs of the selection process.

As we all hope for as many countries as possible to ratify the Istanbul Convention, starting with all members of the EU, in order for this instrument to have more political weight in Europe and beyond, the only way for those to be respected in the different states is to make sure that women's organisations are recognized and get the opportunity to cooperate on strategies and reports.

According to **Liz Meléndez**, Director, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, the Belém do Pará Convention has managed to institutionalize women's rights and promote laws, plans and national programmes against gender violence. Furthermore, today the indicators allow the convention to maintain a certain vigilance over the conduct of governments. Experts have been a support for when these plans or programmes run the risk of being impeded or changed for the worse, for example if the states want to shut them down completely. In these cases, the first thing that the feminist organisations do is to call upon the Convention or turn to the experts.

In the framework of femicide, the prominent case of "Cotton Field" (or "Campo Algodonero"), in which the issue of femicide was stated for the first time, created a precedent in Latin America. This stimulated a large debate taken before the Inter-American System, not as an isolated case, but a case linked to other types of violence against women.

Belém do Pará was the first convention which offered a comprehensive definition and a concept of "violence against women" which made it evident that women are suffering a "continuum" of violence, as

²⁴ <http://www.flora.org.pe/web2/>

²⁵ <http://www.cladem.org/americas-el-caribe>

²⁶ More information at <http://www.womenlobby.org/>

much in the public sphere as in the private sphere. The 20 years of Belém Do Pará have supported the visualisation of violence towards women in a comprehensive manner.

The Istanbul Convention is an important resource which can learn a lot from the Belém do Pará Convention with regards to the participation and the motivation of the women's and feminist movements in Latin America. If it is fundamental to guarantee the participation of civil society, it is also important to ask ourselves who is participating. According to Luz Meléndez, it is not only one group's responsibility to do so. Despite the fact that Provida and fundamentalist organisations are also part of civil society, it is the organisations that have historically contributed to the fight for women's rights in all their diversity that must participate, including movements of indigenous and African women, those with disabilities, people living with HIV, or of migrant organisations.

The existence of a Latin American Convention and a European Convention gives us the opportunity to create an exchange between Latin American and Caribbean movements and European feminist movements about challenges, opportunities and common strategies. Both conventions have an important role with regards to civil society participation because the states, if possible, would prevent civil society from participating, since it is precisely this participation which bothers them.

PANEL IV

Advocacy strategies for the guarantee of the reproductive rights of women: Legal abortion as a requirement for the reduction of deaths among women²⁷

Opening the discussion, **Patsili Toledo**, professor at University of Pompeu Fabra, indicated that the main objective of the panel is to reintroduce the most original concept, i.e. the theoretical development in Diana Russell's work, who initially included in her definition of femicide "*the hidden ways in which women are killed, such as when the patriarchal governments and religions prohibit women from using contraceptives and/or having an abortion. Consequently, millions of women die each year by trying to have an illegal or unsafe abortion*"²⁸. Therefore, let's consider the fact that illegal abortion implicitly leads to the risk of death amongst women in countries in which they cannot access a legal abortion. In many countries, to a greater or lesser degree, the lack of safety involved in carrying out these illegal abortions explains the death of thousands of women and girls; deaths which are also based on gender, caused solely for being women.

Additionally, it must be taken into account that the passing of laws on femicide relies on unanimous support, as much from the right-wing political parties as the left-wing parties. However, in recent years we have been experiencing a situation of serious setbacks in Latin America. In this context, Patsili Toledo insists on the importance of the current debate, in order to fight for the eradication of gender-based violence and to curb the number of maternal deaths caused by abortions

Irene Donadio was invited to talk about the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)²⁹, the biggest organisation working on sexual and reproductive health worldwide. In regards to the issue of abortion, even though most countries of Latin America are considered to be part of a "middle income region", important inequalities remain, and these are often ignored by the authorities and decision makers.

95% of abortions performed in Latin America are considered to be unsafe.

²⁷ Chairs: **Ernest Urtasun**, Member of the European Parliament, Greens / EFA, Patsilí Toledo, lawyer, researcher, and professor, University Pompeu Fabra.

Panelists: Irene Donadio, Public Affairs Manager, International Planned Parenthood Federation, European Network, **Mónica Maureira**, professor and feminist activist, Diego Portales University, **Liz Meléndez**, Director, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, **Cristina Bigordà**, President, Dones amb Iniciativa,

²⁸ Russell, Diana (2011): http://www.dianarussell.com/origin_of_femicide.html.

²⁹ More information on <http://www.ippf.org/>

Latin America has some of the most restrictive laws in the field of abortion. These laws criminalize abortion in any situation, be it in the case of a rape or if the woman's life is at stake. Women themselves are often criminalized, not only when they claim an abortion, but also when they suffered a miscarriage: they need to justify themselves, to provide proof that they did not cause the miscarriage. In this atmosphere, women are afraid to go to the hospital when they need medical help.

What the IPPF tries to achieve is, on one hand, a progressive modification of the laws on abortion and on the other hand, the setting up of a harm reduction strategy. In the field of abortion, harm reduction consists in helping socially excluded women to resort to a medical abortion with misoprostol³⁰.

In addition to encouraging a modification of the legal framework, the objective of the Federation is to ensure their correct implementation. In Ireland for example, the law on abortion has been changed in 2013 to legalize abortion in case it is a matter of safety for the woman. But there are still cases in which the law is not implemented: in 2014 a migrant who was raped was forced to give birth by Caesarean after having claimed to have had suicidal thoughts and starting a hunger strike because of her pregnancy³¹.

In concrete terms, the IPPF uses different instruments including the European Court of Human Rights and the European Social Charter³² to refer to cases and highlight shortcomings in relation to abortion and reproductive health issues. A specific article from the Social Charter on health was for example used to advocate in Italy, where abortion is legalized but not always in practice. Pressure was put on the government to address the problem. The specific case of Italy is a scenario that is repeated in many other countries in which the IPPF tries to take actions.

Mónica Maureira, Professor at the Diego Portales University and feminist activist presented the Campaign "**Right to decide = Free People**"³³ in Chile. For more than 26 years, Chile has made the act of having an abortion strictly punishable by law. For 15 years, different feminist organisations and human rights organisations have denounced this situation before various human rights bodies, since this total ban on abortion means that the Chilean State violates the human rights of women and children across Chile. Currently, Michelle Bachelet's government has submitted a bill to decriminalise abortion on three grounds: if there is a risk to the life of the pregnant woman, foetal unviability and in case of rape.

However, the government is not prioritising this debate, in a context in which additionally, the female representation in Congress stands at only 30%.

The first ground of the bill, in the case of risk to the life of the pregnant woman, is very restrictive since it does not include the risk to the *health* of the woman, but only the *vital risk*. Thus, the bill does not protect the health of the woman, in accordance with the definition from the World Health Organisation, of health as being "*the complete state of physical and social well-being that a person possesses*"³⁴. The bill however limits the scope of risk to the life of the pregnant women in the presence of biological diseases which can lead to their death, while completely ignoring psychological or emotional factors which can cause serious damage to the health of the woman.

The second ground in the case of foetal unviability has received a strong negative response from doctors who consider that the capacity of the foetus to have an extra uterine life can only be detected from the 24 week stage of the pregnancy. At that stage, it is already very difficult to perform an abortion in the public health sphere.

³⁰ Resorting to misoprostol, even without professional medical supervision, is considered safer than other abortion methods women might use. More information on <http://www.ipas.org/en/News/2014/March/Harm-reduction--A-novel-approach-to-addressing-unsafe-abortion.aspx>

³¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/19/us-foundation-womensrights-ireland-idUSKBN0GJ1RK20140819>

³² <http://www.conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/163.htm>

³³ The Campaign "Derecho a Decidir = Personas Libres": <http://decidoysoylibre.cl/>

³⁴ Definition from the World Health Organisation

Regarding the third ground, in case of rape, time limits are also determined: in the case of adult women the time limit is defined for up until the 12 week stage and for girls up until the 18 week stage of the pregnancy.

This is because it is very difficult to detect a pregnancy in a girl of 11 or 12 or 14 years old at 12 weeks, so for this reason they have tried to call the issue into question so that the time limits can be modified.

The feminist organisations and women's organisations in Chile consider that this bill to decriminalise abortion on three grounds is a negligible step with respect to the demands for human rights. This is because these grounds only cover between 3% and 5% of abortion cases which take place at present in the country.

Obviously, the feminist groups demand women's rights to decide in the case of abortion. However, unfortunately, this discussion is obstructed by the political class. To face them, the women's and feminist organisations have organised an initiative in order to increase social awareness in relation to the woman's right to decide, in their campaign "Right to decide = Free People".

The campaign relies on two lines of action; on one hand, to increase awareness amongst state representatives and political parties, through actions of political impact with the written press and in congress and, on the other hand, amongst citizens in general, principally through social media networks.

The use of Facebook and Twitter has been a relevant and effective strategy, since this has served to detect and denounce violations. As a result, various cases of girls, raped by their stepfathers, fathers and brothers, and who are in a very advanced stage of pregnancy of more than 30 weeks have been denounced, as well as other cases in which girls were not only forced to continue with their pregnancies, but who were also forced to continue with unviable pregnancies. The reporting and broadcasting of these cases has meant that the messages in favour of the right to legal abortion have managed to "go viral".

Another line of the campaign is based on the creation of opinion columns, in an attempt to ensure that the media embraces the issue of the campaign on an editorial level, which is very difficult with the mass media in Chile, whose editorial line is very conservative. However, the campaign has managed to establish alliances with more alternative forms of media, or with other forms published on web platforms or digital platforms.

With the idea of generating a more political line of action, the campaign has tried to have influence in debates in congress, especially with the organisations which have a line of work with a more political influence, like "Corporación Humanas".

Liz Meléndez introduced the campaign "**Déjala Decidir**"³⁵ in Peru, where therapeutic abortion has been decriminalised since the year 1924, but only 90 years later, in the year 2014, protocol was passed which means that therapeutic abortion can be performed in hospitals. This has been achieved, largely, thanks to the recommendations of international organisations like the CEDAW, as well as being based on the Belém do Pará Convention.

The campaign "**Déjala Decidir**" is an effort from the feminist and Peruvian women's movement, which has tried to include the issue of the decriminalisation of abortion in cases of sexual violation on the public agenda and in the debate. The campaign has favoured the creation of a very broad platform which brings together more than 80 feminist and women's organisations, university-run organisations and others which share the common strategy of demanding the legalisation of abortion in cases of sexual violation.

³⁵ 'Let her Decide' Campaign http://www.flora.org.pe/web2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=571&Itemid=88

The campaign spreads information about the dramatic reality of sexual violence in Peru, where in 2013 more than 17.000 reports of sexual assault were recorded. 70% of those reported violations were against girls and adolescents and 76% of the assailants who assaulted the minors were relatives.

The criminalisation of abortion in cases of sexual violation forces women to continue with an unwanted pregnancy, product of a violent act. In the campaign, the concept of the women's health is considered as a state of physical, mental and social well-being. Additionally, the campaign reminds the Peruvian State that the Convention on Torture recommends to avoid these situations because forcing a woman to continue with an unwanted pregnancy is a form of violence which can lead to being understood as torture.

Facing the broader interpretation of what feminicide is, like Patsili Toledo discussed, the official information indicates that in Peru 29% of adolescent maternal deaths³⁶ are linked to illegal abortion. Another form of death which can be linked to feminicide is suicide. In Peru 56% of adolescent suicide is an indirect cause of maternal death. This means that the adolescents, by not accepting their pregnancy and being faced with the absence of a legal abortion, commit suicide. This is a fact from the Ministry of Health.

The bill to decriminalise abortion as a consequence of sexual violation was submitted to congress based on a backing of more than 100 thousand signatures which were collected in favour of abortion in cases of sexual violation. Unfortunately, the majority of the arguments which were used in congress are worrying, antiquated and undemocratic speeches. The "technical" opinions which were considered in the legislative debate are linked to organisations of the Catholic Church and the collection of technical opinions linked to secular institutions was impeded. This therefore causes concern in Peru, due to the lack of a secular state.

The Bill was filed by the Justice Commission. Even though the possibilities of the bill being passed by the parliament are minimal, through the Campaign "Let her decide" an agreement was made to continue putting the debate forward to be discussed on the public opinion agenda. In this sense, they have advanced, and in one year there has been an increase of more than 10% of public opinion in favour of the decriminalisation of abortion due to rape and this is already a great achievement.

Even though in practice in Peru there are currently no women imprisoned for having an abortion, since the sentence is short, equally the current punishment for having an abortion turns women who have been raped and who decide to have an abortion into criminals.

Nowadays, conservative anti-abortion groups have denounced feminist organisations which "justify abortion", for having published information on "how to use misoprostol".

Cristina Bigordà from the **Dones Amb Iniciativa/Campanya pel Dret al Propi Cos**³⁷ presented the feminist mobilisation in Spain against reforming the abortion law. The situation of women's sexual and reproductive rights in the Spanish state suffered a very strong offensive with the arrival of the Partido Popular (People's Party), the main right-wing political party, to government in 2011. This party came to government office with an antiquated electoral proposal of removing the Law of sexual and reproductive health which had been passed in 2010, and which grants women the right to voluntarily interrupt their pregnancy during the first 14 weeks.

This government proposed – and, fortunately, stopped an attempt – to pass a Law called "protective rights of the conceived child and the pregnant woman", invoking the statutes of the unborn child and of the conceived child. The proposed law rejected the women's rights to make decisions about their own body

³⁶ "Maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy" : <http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/indmaternalmortality/en/>

³⁷ Dones amb Iniciativa: http://guia.barcelona.cat/es/detall/associacio-dones-amb-iniciativa_99011155848.html

and passed the decision onto the doctors who would evaluate the risk to the woman's health. With an ideological and conservative strategy proposing strengthening the traditional gender roles, the new law would reduce the woman to a subject of the law "without rights", needing guardianship.

This draft bill was an offensive not only against abortion and sexual rights, but also against the state of well-being, democracy, civil rights and the right to universal health, since it also looked to cut back on budget spending linked to public policies, in a context of antisocial policies of austerity.

All of this was collected in the shadow report prepared by the organisation of the feminist movement to present before the CEDAW Committee, in charge of reviewing the Spanish state report. But also on an internal level, the role of the women's organisations in the mobilisation of platforms expressing their opposition to the government's proposal was decisive. Thus, this produced a strong pressure on public opinion, ensuring that the draft bill was withdrawn.

In the Spanish legal framework, the Constitutional Court has ruled that the unborn child will be protected, but not a subject of the law, and that the international conventions value this decision. This also helped to stop the proposal. The great victory, therefore, has been to make sure that the draft bill was withdrawn and to make the minister of justice resign, who was the main instigator of the initiative.

However, there is still the task of making sure the government withdraws the limitation of the current law, which requires the maternal or paternal consent of individuals who are less than 16 years of age who want to willingly have an abortion. This situation, which occurs in thousands of cases of adolescents who suffer from rape from within the family, suggests that the state is turning their back on them and does not offer them protection.

In his final words, Ernest Urtasun, stated that with regards to abortion, the European Parliament has achieved two small victories during this mandate. In the Taravela report, sexual and reproductive rights have been recognised. A campaign called "All of Us" which brings together the members of Parliament to discuss this issue has been created, in response to the presence and campaign of the anti-abortion groups ("pro-vida") is very strong. Additionally, a working group about violence has been formed within the Parliament which could well monitor the EU-CELAC dialogue.

Conclusions and Recommendations of the civil society to the EU-CELAC Summit on violence against women and femicide / feminicide

In the wake of the VIII Conference on Femicide and its Follow-Up Strategy Meeting, recommendations were addressed to the EU-CELAC Summit that took place on 10th June 2015 in Brussels.

Recommendations from civil society on violence against women and femicide /femicide for the EU-CELAC Summit

- Civil society organisations in Latin America and Europe are convinced that the eradication of violence against women and girls (VAW) in all its forms and, in particular, its most extreme manifestation, namely femicide / feminicide, requires that **States must comply with the duty to exercise due diligence** to ensure the rights of women.

- One of the central issues in the **Bi-Regional EU-CELAC Dialogue on Gender** in the 2013 Santiago Summit was the struggle to eradicate violence against women and femicide or feminicide. This marked an important milestone for Bi-Regional cooperation; however, it has so far proved insufficient. As noted in the Santiago Summit, dialogue **should be strengthened through the participation of women's and feminist organisations** from both regions, who will share the progress made in each of their countries.
- We believe that the new Summit must agree effective measures to guarantee that progress is made in the eradication of this violence. Therefore, we ask that:
 - In the new bi-regional EU-CELAC strategic action plan, the section on eradicating discrimination and the elimination of all forms of VAW is strengthened.
 - The chapter on gender must be based on standards established under the CEDAW, the Convention of Belem do Para, the Istanbul Convention and regional human rights instruments, including the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.
 - To combat all forms of VAW, the Bi-Regional dialogue on gender must include at least two annual sessions and must, with the participation of women's and feminist organisations, set time-bound operational objectives and activities, and effective mechanisms for evaluation and monitoring of their fulfilment.
 - On the basis of the recognition of women's diversity due to ethnicity, age and sexual orientation, among others; this chapter should at least ensure:
 - 1) The visibility of all forms of VAW, in particular femicide / femicide, sexual violence, trafficking for sexual exploitation and disappearances, as well as recognition of the interrelationship between all these expressions of violence.
 - 2) Access to effective and efficient justice for all women and the eradication of impunity, including adequate reparation for victims and their families, establishing guarantees of non-repetition and ensuring transitional justice.
 - 3) Recognition of the strategic role of feminist and women's organisations in the definition and evaluation of the State response to all forms of VAW, to ensure the sustainability of any progress made, the monitoring of processes undertaken and accountability.

In order for States to **show due diligence, which implies preventing, protecting, investigating and punishing all acts of violence and compensating the victims**, they must:

- Sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention and the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW, in order to make progress on implementing shared standards on women's rights.
- Make progress in implementing the recommendations and rulings of United Nations human rights bodies, particularly the CEDAW Committee, and promote collaboration and dialogue between the monitoring mechanisms of the Convention of Belem do Para and the Istanbul Convention.
- In coordination with the feminist and women's movement, produce official and accessible statistical information on all forms of VAW in the private or public sector and, in particular, on femicide / feminicide.
- Eliminate rules and practices that hinder the full exercise of citizenship for women, guaranteeing their sexual and reproductive rights and the secular state and promoting changes in cultural beliefs that contribute to the perpetuation of discrimination and violence against women, through sustained and high impact actions.

- Promote education for equality as a key tool in prevention and to counteract gender based violence.
- Strengthen work with the media to make progress on the eradication of sexist stereotypes and set minimum ethical standards on the media's treatment of discrimination and violence against women, promoting and monitoring compliance with human rights, and recommending sanctions where necessary.
- Implement protective measures for women who have experienced violence, that do not restrict their autonomy and rights, which are not limited to complaints procedures, criminal proceedings or other measures, as well as effective protection mechanisms.
- Ensure the availability of protective measures with the most advanced existing technologies, appropriate to the situation of all women in their various roles including as social activists and defenders.
- Adopt specific legislation to criminalise all forms of VAW and femicide / feminicide, in accordance with international human rights standards. This legislation includes sanctions for state agents who fail in their duty to act with due diligence in this matter, through action or omission.
- Implement a feminist training programme on VAW for all professionals involved in these cases, including justice officials, health care workers, the police, educational institutions, neighbourhood associations, and the media.
- Improve and specialise judicial systems, ensuring that women have physical, economic and cultural access to justice, including appropriate tools for the effective investigation and punishment of crimes, and the availability of the necessary legal information for feedback and publicity on judgments to ensure accountability with civil society.
- Eliminate police, administrative or legal procedures that discriminate against women or place them in danger, including reconciliation processes. Concrete mechanisms and actions should be implemented to eradicate gender stereotypes in legal proceedings, at different investigation stages and / or during the processing of cases.

European and Latin American States must recognise the many interrelated factors that aggravate VAW, including transnational economic policies that affect the lives of women and girls, in particular:

- The disproportionate impact of strategies to combat gun violence and the “war on drugs” on the lives of women and their exposure to violence. These strategies also weaken States, thwarting their efforts to combat impunity. Recognising these impacts should lead States to promote a shift in global drug policy in the upcoming special session of the UN General Assembly (UNGASS 2016), placing at the centre the safeguarding of human rights, the urgency of eradicating extreme violence and the reduction of arms sales to Latin American countries.
- The consequences for women of trade agreements that favour large-scale industrial projects in Latin American countries, placing the lives of their communities at risk and increasing their vulnerability to various forms of violence. It must be ensured that trade agreements are consistent with international standards for individual and collective human rights.

Finally, we ask that:

- The European Union and Latin American States include as a priority the fight against all forms of VAW in their bilateral cooperation and regional development, economic relations and political dialogue.
- The chapter on gender is granted resources for its implementation, providing a specific fund to promote and strengthen the strategic work of feminist and women's rights organisations.

- The EU applies its guidelines on VAW in its human rights and foreign policy and promotes the eradication of this violence in the Gender Action Plan on Women's Empowerment and Development (GAP II) and the new European Strategy for Equality between Women and Men.
- Finally, the Bi-Regional CELAC EU action plan should promote a strong position from both regions at the 60th Session of the Commission on the Legal and Social Status of Women (CSW, March 2016) and thereby ensure the best possible outcome with regards to the international struggle against VAW, one fundamental objective of the post-2015 agenda.