

Joint Statement ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November 2015

Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Věra Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development and Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management made the following statement:

Ahead of the occasion of the International Day for the elimination of violence against women, we join our voices to put an end to violence against women and girls. This violence constitutes a blatant violation of human rights and gender discrimination that blights every country in Europe and worldwide.

We strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and girls.

The figures are alarming: one in three women in the EU has experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lives. Too many girls are married or mutilated in childhood within our borders and beyond. In many countries, over half of murdered women are killed by an intimate partner, a relative or family member, in their own homes. They are also very vulnerable to all forms of violence in conflict areas and during humanitarian crises.

This year, we should pay special attention to the growing numbers of women seeking refuge or asylum in the EU. Some have been raped, beaten or sexually exploited during their journey, while others flee gender-based violence in their home countries. They are arriving in Europe in need of gender-sensitive support, which we must provide.

Combating all forms of violence against women and girls remains a key priority for the Commission, both within and outside EU borders. The EU Victims' Rights Directive, which recognises the specific needs of victims of gender-based violence, entered into force on 16 November. We support the EU accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence as a further step to effectively combat violence against women and girls at national and European levels.

Another form of violence that targets most specifically women and girls is sexual violence in conflict. As we are celebrating the 15th anniversary of the UN Security Council's milestone Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the EU and the international community must intensify their efforts to eliminate all such forms of violence and bring the perpetrators to justice.

We believe that there cannot be sustainable development without women's empowerment and this cannot be achieved without eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls. This is why the EU has worked hard to put women's rights at the core of the new Sustainable Development Goals, including specific targets regarding the elimination of gender-specific violence and harmful practices against women and girls.

As from January 2016, a new Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 for EU external relations, endorsed by the Council, will be applied. Fighting against all forms of violence against women and girls is one of the priority objectives. In an effort to raise awareness, the European External Action Service has recently launched a diplomatic outreach with a focus on all forms of violence against children and women and in particular to end child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

This year, the European Commission has allocated about €8 million in projects preventing and combating violence against women and girls within the EU and €20 million in fighting against harmful practices abroad. The EU continues to fund humanitarian projects that respond to gender-based violence in emergencies and crises.

Today, the Berlaymont building is lit in orange in support of the '16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence' campaign of the UN Secretary General.

The EU is firmly committed to strengthen its efforts in order to make gender-based violence a problem of the past.