Stop violence against women: Statement by the European Commission on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we say once again, violence must stop now.

Violence against women and girls still takes place every day, inside and outside the European Union. This violation of human rights is pervasive and has many different faces: it happens regardless of social background, whether at home, at work, at school, in the street, playing sports or online. It limits women’s and girls' full participation in all aspects of society – political, cultural, social and economic.

One in three women in Europe has experienced either physical and/or sexual violence. 80% of trafficking victims inside the EU are female. In developing countries, one in every three girls is married before reaching age 18.

Things have however started to change. Over the last 30 years, the incidence of female genital mutilation has decreased by 50% in Africa. In South Asia, the percentage of girls married under the age of 15 has gone down by half. And the recent global #metoo movement, which contributed to drawing attention to the extent of sexual assault and harassment in our societies, has encouraged victims to speak up, and claim and defend their rights.

To eliminate this gender-based violence once and for all, we need to improve education and legislation and change social norms. We have dedicated 2017 to European action to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, both in the public and private spheres. Lawyers, doctors, teachers and police, among others, are being trained to support victims and to prevent gender-based violence, thanks to EU financial support to NGOs.

Taking action beyond our borders, we launched with the United Nations the Spotlight Initiative, with
an unprecedented initial investment of €500 million. The Initiative addresses on a global scale the root causes of violence against women and girls, helps victims and empowers them to contribute to more secure, more resilient, richer and freer societies. Eliminating violence against women and girls is a first step towards global peace and security and is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is a precondition for the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights, gender equality, democracy, and economic growth.

The European Union will continue to work tirelessly through all instruments at its disposal to eliminate violence against women and girls, making it a thing of the past."
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