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United Nations Simulation Conference 2023
United Nations Commission on the Status Of Women



BACKGROUND GUIDE

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Letter from the chairs

Dear Delegates,

Greetings and warm welcome to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. It is in our esteemed honor to have you in our midst as we engage in a war with words to ultimately lay emphasis on addressing the pressing matters that hinder the true feminist dream from solidifying and becoming reality.

UNSC is a platform for you to put your diplomacy and research skills on display, an opportunity that you are expected to take full advantage of with the added benefit the CSW provides by allowing you to sharpen your negotiation and logical thinking skills as you delve into untangling norms woven deep in our society. You are encouraged to not solely depend on this background guide as it would be the equivalent of bringing a knife to a gunfight. Arm yourselves with a proficiency of not only your country's role in the agendas put forth but also with the details of every nook and cranny of your country's policies to prevent any discrepancies.

We believe that you will harness the power that comes from your country's big reputations with the utmost respect. Remember delegates that despite the competitive spirits that will fill every corner of the committee hall, we are gathered to serve a notion greater than being awarded an individual trophy. We are gathered to make a difference, to establish friendships and above all, gather knowledge; so bend when you can and snap when you have to. With that being said, we wish you all the best and look forward to seeing you.

Best wishes,

Chairs of the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women,
Aiswarya Prasanth, Amy Mathew and Shreya Sivakumar

The Commission on the Status of Women

Established on 21 June 1946, The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The Commission began working after its founding in 1946 to directly introduce women's rights to the international arena. This was achieved through a variety of means, most commonly through attempts to collect data that showed discrimination occurring against women.

Member States agree on actions to accelerate progress and promote women's enjoyment of their rights in political, economic, and social fields. The outcomes and recommendations of each session are forwarded to ECOSOC for follow-up. UN Women supports all aspects of the Commission's work. We also facilitate the participation of civil society representatives.

The Commission adopts multi-year programmes of work to appraise progress and make further recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action. These recommendations take the form of negotiated agreed conclusions on a priority theme. The Commission also contributes to the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

“Are Reproductive Rights Human Rights?”

Reproductive rights refer to a diversity of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights affecting the sexual and reproductive life of individuals and couples. Reproductive rights began to develop as a subset of human rights at the United Nations 1968 International Conference on Human Rights. The resulting non-binding Proclamation of Tehran was the first international document to recognize one of these rights when it stated that: "Parents have a basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and the spacing of their children". Women's sexual, gynecological, and mental health issues were not a priority of the United Nations until its Decade of Women (1975–1985) brought them to the forefront.

In addition, the twenty-year "Cairo Programme of Action" was adopted in 1994 at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo. The non-binding Programme of Action asserted that governments have a responsibility to meet individuals' reproductive needs, rather than demographic targets. It recommended that family planning services be provided in the context of other reproductive health services, including services for healthy and safe childbirth, care for sexually transmitted infections, and post-abortion care. The ICPD also addressed issues such as violence against women, sex trafficking, and adolescent health. Since the ICPD, many countries have broadened their reproductive health programs and attempted to integrate maternal and child health services with family planning. More attention is paid to adolescent health and the consequences of unsafe abortion. In two preparatory meetings for the ICPD+10 in Asia and Latin America, the United States, under George W. Bush administration was the only nation opposing the ICPD's Programme of Action.

Contradicting these attempts were the extreme state interventions. Examples include attempts to forcefully increase the birth rate – one of the most notorious natalist policies of the 20th century was that which occurred in communist Romania in the period of 1967–1990 during communist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu, who adopted a very aggressive natalist policy which included outlawing abortion and contraception, routine pregnancy tests for women, taxes on childlessness, and legal discrimination against childless people – as well as attempts to decrease the fertility rate – China's one child policy (1978–2015).

Further on the Istanbul convention, the first legally binding instrument in Europe in the field of violence against women and domestic violence, prohibits forced sterilization and forced abortion.

However, half a century later, not much has shifted. The reproductive rights of women are decided by the men in the parliament without taking into consideration the mental or financial stability of women and girl children who conceive. It is about time that women raised their voice to say ‘No Uterus, No opinion’. Moving on to men's reproductive rights, it has been argued that

when a woman becomes pregnant she has the option of abortion, adoption, or parenthood. A man, however, has none of those options, but will still be affected by the woman's decision. The opportunity to give men the right for a paper abortion is heavily discussed. Sperm theft is another related issue.

Reproductive rights aren't abstract. They're concrete and consequential. Reproductive rights definitely should be concentrated towards the well being and comfort of the women whom it affects the most, however not at the cost of ignoring the opinion of men and other genders who also contribute to the same.

Key terms

Reproductive rights:

Reproductive rights are legal rights and freedoms relating to reproduction and reproductive health that vary amongst countries around the world.

State interventions:

Any action carried out by the government that affects the public.

Fertility rate:

Total fertility rate represents the number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years and bear children in accordance with age-specific fertility rates of the specified year.

Abortion:

The deliberate termination of a human pregnancy, most often performed during the first 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Sperm theft:

Sperm theft, also known as unauthorized use of sperm, forced fatherhood, spermjacking or spurgling, occurs when a man's semen is used, against his will or without his knowledge or consent, to inseminate a woman.

Key Parties

United States of America (USA):

Abortion in the United States has been a constitutional right since the United States Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* which decriminalized abortion nationwide in 1973, and established a minimal period during which abortion is legal (with more or fewer restrictions throughout the pregnancy) until this decision was overturned in June 2022 by the decision *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. Abortion rights are now decided at the state level. As of 31 January 2023, abortion is illegal in 14 states.

India:

Large proportions of women continue to face social and domestic pressures and constraints that limit their ability to formulate and act on reproductive decisions. In particular, the continued strength of son preference is well documented (19); 33% of women would like to have more sons than daughters with 85% of women wanting at least one son. In India, a disabled girl-child is usually at the receiving end of a lot of contempt and neglect. Women with disabilities have been consistently denied their rights.

Pakistan:

The legal framework in Pakistan is highly restrictive and penalizes abortion unless it is for “necessary treatment,” which is, according to Islamic jurisprudence—which the law is based on— before the formation of fetal organs. The government of Pakistan has failed to keep its obligations to protect and promote sexual and reproductive health rights and services, according to the report made by the Center for Reproductive Rights and its partner to the Universal Periodic Review (“UPR”) Working Group of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Brazil:

Adopted in 1940, Brazil's criminal code makes abortion illegal except in cases of rape and when the life of the woman is at risk. According to the World Health Organization, Brazil has the fourth highest rate of anencephaly pregnancy cases, where a severe fetal anomaly causes the fetus to lack proper brain formation. There is no chance for the baby to survive after birth into infancy. An infant born with anencephaly will usually be born blind, deaf and unconscious. If an anencephalic infant is not stillborn, the baby will often die within hours or days.

Iran:

Iranian law prohibits the use of contraceptives and bans abortion. This prohibition does not come within the scope of caring about women's lives. It comes in the context of increasing the number of state employees, violating the rights of women within the state and resorting to ways that may endanger women's lives.

Philippines:

The Philippines has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world, without any clear exceptions. Two United Nations treaty bodies have recently called on the country to advance sexual and reproductive health rights.

The PCHR's position on abortion has evolved over the past two decades, from declaring abortion "immoral" to acknowledging the impact of abortion bans on health and human rights to finally recommending decriminalization. The Center's advocacy efforts contributed to the PCHR's shift in its position on abortion.

Key Issues

The global status of women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights is disturbing: 214 million women worldwide want, but lack access to, contraception; more than 800 women die daily from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

As delegates, we expect you to tackle the following issues in the system:-

1. Abortion

Around 45% of all abortions are unsafe, of which 97% take place in developing countries. Unsafe abortion is a leading – but preventable – cause of maternal deaths and morbidities. It can lead to physical and mental health complications and social and financial burdens for women, communities and health systems. Lack of access to safe, timely, affordable and respectful abortion care is a critical public health and human rights issue. Around 73 million induced abortions take place worldwide each year. Six out of 10 (61%) of all unintended pregnancies, and 3 out of 10 (29%) of all pregnancies, end in induced abortion. Restrictive abortion regulation can cause distress and stigma, and risk constituting a violation of human rights of women and girls, including the right to privacy and the right to non-discrimination and equality, while also imposing financial burdens on women and girls.

2. Ban on contraception

Taliban fighters have stopped the sale of contraceptives in two of Afghanistan's main cities, claiming their use by women is a western conspiracy to control the Muslim

population. Taliban has been going door to door, threatening midwives and ordering pharmacies to clear their shelves of all birth control medicines and devices. About 50 million women between the ages of 15 and 49 years use some form of contraception. But those with low income largely rely on Planned Parenthood or other publicly funded clinics to pay for their birth control pills. In Texas, a federal judge has also limited young people's access to birth control.

3. Prenatal services

Low-level access may be due to lack of awareness, information, resources, facilities, health care providers, and cost of services. Women living in developed countries receive more prenatal care than those who are living in the developing countries. At a global rate, 83% of pregnant women who are living in the developing countries have received prenatal care only once. Women's negative attitude to health care was one of the most important prenatal care utilization barrier.

Focusing Questions

1. What steps can the international community take to ensure that women living in developing countries receive sufficient prenatal care?
2. What should be the opinion of UNCSW on extreme abortion laws?
3. Does your country allow abortions in the case of rape, mentally and financially unstable women? To what extent are the abortions laws eased in your country?
4. Should contraceptives be made accessible to the age group of 14-17? Would it be more beneficial to adolescents ?

Recommended Readings

1. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abortion>
2. https://www.unwomen.org/en/search-results?search_api_fulltext=reproduction+rights
3. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/issues.html>

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UNFPA- A Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming, 2010, p. 70.

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/NHRIHandbook.pdf>

Not Up for Debate: LGBTQ People Need and Deserve Tailored Sexual and Reproductive Health Care

<https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2020/11/not-debate-lgbtq-people-need-and-deserve-tailored-sexual-and-reproductive-health>

Women reproductive rights in India: prospective future

<https://ro.uow.edu.au/medpapers/130/>

Submission to the UN Human Rights Council Examines Pakistan's Lack of Progress on SRHR Issues

<https://reproductiverights.org/pakistan-upr-srhr-un-human-rights-council/#:~:text=The%20legal%20framework%20in%20Pakistan,the%20formation%20of%20fetal%20organs.>

“Regulation of International Media to prevent the spread of misogyny and sexual harassment”

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women strives to create a safer and more inclusive media environment for all. The regulation of international media to prevent the spread of misogyny and sexual harassment is a significant concern addressed by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW).

A global study found out that 38 percent of women have personal experiences of online violence, and 85 percent of women who are online have witnessed digital violence against other women. In the Arab states 60 percent of women have been exposed to online violence and 28 percent of women have experienced online threats in the sub-Saharan African.

The increase in VAWF increased during the COVID-19 pandemic as most women shifted to online for work and education. The pandemic also led to an intensification of the different forms of violence against women.

According to a research by ICFJ, 73% of female journalists surveyed experienced online violence, with 25% of the messages they received threatening physical violence and 18% threatening sexual violence.

Misinformation and defamation are reported as the most common tactics used to silence women, limiting their ability to speak out online, or ‘de-platforming’ them, forcing them out of the online political arena altogether. Women activists are targeted with forms of abuse intended to silence them, including “pile-ons” where activists are targeted by coordinated waves of different forms of online abuse. There is evidence that women and girls experience higher rates and more severe online violence when engaging in advocacy, particularly related to gender justice.

Andrew Tate, a recent podcaster earned his admiration among people with his viral advocacy about male dominance, female submission and wealth. His tik tok account was followed by young middle and high schoolers and soon started to harass their female classmates. Soon, the influencer was banned from all social media platforms.

Celebrities who have faced misogyny and sexual harassment are actively contributing to the society to create awareness. Beyoncé, known for her feminist stance uses her music and performances to address issues of gender inequality and violence against women. The actress and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador, Emma Watson has been actively involved in promoting gender equality and combating violence against women. It's important to acknowledge the

collective efforts of activists, organizations, and individuals working together to address VAWG and create a safer and more equitable world for all.

The UNCSW recognizes the influential role of media in shaping societal perceptions and behaviors and aims to promote gender equality, eliminate discrimination, and combat violence against women, including through media-related measures.

Key Terms

1. **VAWG**
Violence against women and girls.
2. **Defamation**
Defamation is the act of communicating to a third party false statements about a person, place, or thing that results in damage to its reputation.
3. **Misogyny**
Misogyny is hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women. It is a form of sexism that is used to keep women at a lower social status than men, thus maintaining the social roles of patriarchy.
4. **Dehumanization**
The treatment of other people as though they lack the mental capacities that are commonly attributed to human beings.

Timeline

- The 1990's to the Early 2000's saw the emergence of the internet and expanding of Online communities. During these years the new platform was adopted and saw the growth of online blogs. The internet became more accessible and more people began participating in online discussions and interactions.
- From the mid to late 2000's saw the rise of Social media platforms, and at this stage the users were maturing and started to express their opinions publicly. At this stage, due to the growth of online platforms incidents of cyberbullying, misogynistic harassment started rising. Women in particular began targets of online threats
- The year 2014 saw The Gamergate controversy which was centered around the gaming industry. This phase highlighted the misogyny faced by women in the gaming industry with incidents of doxxing, threats and online abuse.

- During this very same period, awareness of online harassment including sexual harassment and misogyny. There was effort to address the issue and companies began implementing policies to tackle harassment and speech
- #MeToo Movement initiated in 2017, highlighted the widespread prevalence of sexual harassment and assault, sparking global conversations advocating for change.

Issues of misogyny and sexual harassment have deep rooted history and therefore cannot be attributed to a specific timeline but over the years the spread of technology has caused an increase in violence against women.

Key Parties

INDIA

More than 50 percent of COVID- related misogynistic narratives were originally posted from the self declared members of misogynist organizations of India. The three most popular narratives expressed on Facebook and Twitter were “*COVID-19 is exposing the ugly truth about women,*” “*Women are more dangerous than men during COVID-19*”, and “*COVID19 is highlighting gender-biased laws that disadvantage men.*”

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Women in public life, journalists, activists, and marginalized communities have often been targets of online abuse, threats, and harassment.

During the U.S. national elections in 2020, women candidates were attacked online more often than men—particularly on Twitter, and sometimes by up to three times as much. One example of this targeting was a coordinated campaign of disinformation and harassment attempting to malign Kamala Harris’ record as a prosecutor.

BRAZIL

Brazil has a long history of patriarchy and recently the misogynist discourse and attacks against female politicians have rapidly increased. Black People in Brazil particularly Black women are regularly dehumanized on social media platforms. Brazilian researchers at the University of Southampton, recently found that Black women form 81% of victims of online racism on Brazillian Facebook.

Key Issues

1. Violence against Women Journalists

Globally, women journalists face increasing offline and online attacks and are subject to stigmatization, sexist hate speech, trolling, physical assault, rape and even murder.

Online violence against female journalists is one of the most serious global threats to press freedom and has contributed to female reporters being murdered, according to researchers behind a new global report.

2. Social Media

A landmark survey conducted across 20 countries revealed that globally most common attacks are on Facebook where 39% have suffered harassment, followed by Instagram (23%), WhatsApp (14%), Snapchat (10%), Twitter (9%) and TikTok (6%). It was observed that the most common type of online harm is abusive and insulting language (reported by 59%), followed by deliberate embarrassment (41%) as well as body shaming and threats of sexual violence (both 39%).

3. Covid Pandemic

Due to the outbreak of covid pandemic violence against women and girls have increased globally. During lockdowns the increase in dependence of communication on social media increased the online misogyny. Women, especially those in the public eye faced heightened levels of harassment, abuse and gender-based discrimination on social platforms.

Past Actions:

1. UNESCO has advocated for the safety of women journalists and collaborates with various partners to identify and implement practices countering attacks against women journalists. They published [The Chilling](#), a study on global trends in online violence against women journalists, which demonstrated the extent of attacks against women journalists and the impact on their well-being, their work and press freedom at large. In addition they work with specialized organizations to train women media workers on the ground.
2. The UN's Generation Equality Forum, held in 2021, focused on advancing gender equality globally. It included discussions on digital inclusion, online safety, and combatting violence against women, acknowledging the importance of addressing online misogyny and sexual harassment.

3. The US has convened a Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse that brings together governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to address gender-based online harassment and abuse.
4. The UN has developed international standards and conventions that promote gender equality, respect for women's rights, and the elimination of violence against women, both online and offline. Notable conventions include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Focusing Questions

1. How can the UN assist countries in implementing and enforcing existing laws and regulations related to online violence against women?
2. How can your country establish accessible reporting mechanisms for victims of online misogyny and sexual harassment? Are there sufficient support services, such as helplines, counseling, and legal aid, available for survivors?
3. How can your country ensure the privacy and safety of individuals reporting cases of online harassment, and how can they be protected from retaliation?
4. What strategies can be employed to raise awareness among individuals of all ages about the consequences and impact of online misogyny and sexual harassment?
5. What mechanisms can be put in place to hold perpetrators accountable?

Recommended readings:

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/wom2224.doc.htm>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2018/04/30/feminists-were-right-ignoring-online-misogyny-has-deadly-consequences/>

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