

Addressing Remarks

Opening of the UNODC Webinar on Coordinated Criminal Justice Response to Gender-based Violence against Women for criminal justice practitioners in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1 December 2021

Distinguished participants,

I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to address you today and congratulate you on conducting the webinar on Coordinated Criminal Justice Response to Gender-based Violence against Women for criminal justice practitioners in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Gender-based violence is an issue that is important for the whole region of South Eastern Europe. This is an important issue for my country as well and therefore I am pleased to be able to address you on this topic.

Data collected by UN Office on Drugs and Crime show that 80% of the victims of intimate-partner homicide cases are women. The consequences of violence are horrific. Often it costs women and girls their lives. Or, when they are survivors, the trauma leaves them more likely to fall into depression, and in some cases develop substance abuse and other self-destructive behaviours and disorders.

It is important that the UN Office on Drugs and Crime is leading today's exchange of views as a UN Office mandated to promote crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women, in line with relevant international standards and norms. We should all practice enhanced co-operation, both within the UN agencies and national institutions on this important topic and promote a truly gender-responsive police and justice sector, where officials are fully trained, supported by management, and enjoy faith and trust of the communities in which they live and work. At the same time, we should ensure that women and girls remain safe, and that those who perpetrate violence will be held accountable.

Official authorities, including the law enforcement bodies, should work more with victim support institutions and civil society organisations that support survivors of gender-based violence. More needs to be done towards establishing more available emergency hotlines, services for victims of domestic violence, especially after and during COVID-19 pandemic.

Statistics has shown that few women report violence. It is important that we all work together as a society to create an environment where victims of violence would feel confident to report to authorities, so that perpetrators are prosecuted and justice is served. We all have the obligation to encourage women not to be silent and report violence.

Responding to gender-based violence should remain priority and authorities should send a clear message that reporting violence or accessing essential services is possible even when lockdowns or movement restrictions are in place.

Criminal justice authorities must work hand in hand with other sectors to ensure that responses to violence against women are comprehensive and that survivors receive essential health, social, police and justice services.

Judicial and police responses must focus on survivors and provide swift, unobstructed protection and access to justice.

Community programmes should address risks associated with gender-based violence, including poverty and unemployment, but also attitudes condoning or justifying violence.

Governments and institutions should provide support to safeguard women in their homes and enable them to report violence and abuse.

Civil society should be seen as a partner that can provide services needed to victims. Diverse actors should be also included, such as hospitals, pharmacies, grocery stores, and postal services, who have proven to be valuable partners in facilitating reporting of domestic violence in a number of countries.

Increasing the number of women working in the justice and law enforcement sectors, especially in leadership roles, can also improve criminal justice outcomes and access to justice for all.

Greater preventive measures are crucial. Progressive policies and strong messaging on gender equality are essential to abolish the norms and stereotypes that lead to violence against women, and to make men and boys part of the solution.

I am looking forward to more results in this important area and am pledging my support to these efforts, within my capacities. I welcome the cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and encourage you to work with them as they seek to support us all in the region of South Eastern Europe in preventing and responding to gender-based violence against women.

There is still a lot of work to do for all of us, and I am grateful to you and your institutions for the efforts and commitment to ending gender-based violence against women.

With this, I wish you a successful event today.

Thank you.