

UN Human Rights Council 41st Session – 27 June 2019
Oral Statement on Annual Full-Day Discussion on the Human Rights of
Women: Violence Against Women in the World of Work

Check against Delivery

Thank you, Mr. President.

This statement is delivered by Plan International, in collaboration with Defence for Children International, Terre des Hommes International Federation and ECPAT International, who are working together in the Girls Advocacy Alliance to effect policy change to eradicate violence against girls and promote their economic empowerment.

Urgent action is required to end gender-based discrimination and recognize violence and harassment in the world of work as a major human rights issue. More than one in three countries have no laws against sexual harassment in the workplace. While we enthusiastically welcome the adoption last week of a new ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, the GAA regrets that the human rights language in this Convention was significantly weakened. We urge the Human Rights Council to make a strong statement that all forms of violence constitute a violation of human rights, regardless of where it takes place.

Power dynamics that exist outside the workplace can often be compounded in work settings, enabled by the hierarchical nature of the workplace. In particular, young female survivors of violence who fear stigma and retaliation may lack the support to challenge power dynamics. They often cannot access formal avenues to seek redress, as these may be non-existent, inaccessible or unsafe.

We urge Member States to:

1. Recognize that threats and acts of violence and harassment in the world of work extend beyond the physical workplace. Violence and harassment in both the public and private spheres must be addressed, including domestic violence, as they can be significant obstacles to women's ability to fully participate in the world of work.
2. Implement laws and policies for decent work, to ensure access to justice for survivors of violence, as well as measures to combat violence and harassment in the world of work, recognizing that informal workers and those in non-standard employment arrangements may be more vulnerable to violence in the world of work.
3. Ensure that companies adopt a gender-transformative approach to violence and harassment and that they establish gender-sensitive codes of conduct with adequate training as well as confidential redress procedures.

Thank you.