

need to be matched with deeds, with action. Now is the time for implementation and accountability. We must continue moving forward with courage, conviction and commitment.”

The conclusions mainly call for prevention, including through education and awareness raising, and addressing gender inequalities in the political, economic and social spheres; implementation of services for survivors of violence, including for health, psychological support and counselling, social support in the short and long term; and the need for services to protect the right to sexual and reproductive health. Availability of data and punishment of perpetrators were also highlighted as necessary measures to effectively combat violence against women and girls.

More information at: [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

## → Call for funds

I wish to thank the parliaments that have contributed to the funding of the activities of the Parliamentary Network “Women Free from Violence”. This is a tangible sign of their determination to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence.

These voluntary contributions have enabled us to produce a Handbook for parliamentarians entitled Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), available in 14 different languages, together with visibility material (poster, leaflet, newsletter); to organise a series of exchanges of views on themes such as the role of parliamentarians and parliamentary networks in eradicating violence against women and refugee women and in the promotion of the Istanbul Convention; and to promote actively the signature and ratification of the Istanbul Convention, namely through the organisation of parliamentary seminars (Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy and Portugal).

The Network needs your support to speed up the entry into force of the convention. If you wish to support us with a voluntary contribution, please contact Ms Géraldine Grenet ([geraldine.grenet@coe.int](mailto:geraldine.grenet@coe.int), tel. +33 3 90 21 49 82), Project Manager, or Ms Elodie Fischer ([elodie.fischer@coe.int](mailto:elodie.fischer@coe.int), tel. + 33 3 90 21 56 34), Co-Secretary of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation and support.

Mendes Bota

## → News



### New signatures

Andorra signed the Istanbul Convention on 22 February 2013. It was followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina on 8 March 2013, thus increasing the number of signatory member states to 26.

### Translation of the Handbook

The Handbook has been recently translated into Albanian, Arabic and Azeri. It is now available in 14 languages. You can find it on the Network website [www.assembly.coe.int/stopviolence/](http://www.assembly.coe.int/stopviolence/)

## → Events

### Network meeting – Prostitution and Trafficking, 24 April 2013

At its next meeting, organised jointly with the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, the Network will hold a hearing on prostitution and trafficking, with the participation of Mr Simon Häggström, a police officer from the Prostitution Unit of the Stockholm Police and Ms Ilonka Stakelborough, founder of Stichting Geisha, trade union for sex workers in the Netherlands. Participants will hear a testimony by a victim of trafficking.

### Seminar in Baku, 7 May 2013

At the initiative of Ms Sahiba Gafarova, member of the Azerbaijani Parliament, a parliamentary seminar on the Istanbul Convention will be organised on 7 May 2013 in Baku. During this event, which will take place on the premises of the parliament, the Handbook in Azerbaijani will be presented. The seminar will take place in Azerbaijani, English and Russian.

### Human rights film festivals

Human rights film festivals take place every year in major European cities. They often screen films dealing with the issue of violence against women. Should you wish, as a member of the Network, to participate in a roundtable at one of these events, please contact the secretariat.



#### Secretariat contacts

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# Parliamentary Network “Women Free from Violence”

NEWSLETTER – April 2013



## The Istanbul Convention, a “gold standard”

We at UN Women very much welcome the Istanbul Convention as an important addition to the evolving body of norms and standards around the globe.

The Istanbul Convention complements existing legal norms, and expands the international framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It represents a “gold standard” and indeed, if I may say, is *primus inter pares* among instruments specifically targeting the elimination of violence against women. Europe now has a strong, legally-binding convention which sets out clear directives and commitments on the prevention, protection, prosecution and the response to violence against women, particularly in the area of domestic violence.

There are many important aspects of the convention we could examine. First, the Convention makes the crucial link between the elimination of violence against women and the achievement of gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Secondly, the convention puts particular emphasis on the importance of early prevention, which is also the case that UN Women has been making. The best way to stop violence is to prevent it from happening in the first place.

For this, we need more awareness-raising campaigns, but we also need education programmes that teach human rights, equality and mutual respect.

[Related to this point] is the reaffirmation that culture, custom, religion, tradition or so-called “honour” cannot be invoked as grounds to justify any act of violence.

Let me end with a strong call to action. First, more governments need to ratify the Istanbul Convention. It is a shame that almost two years after its conception, only three countries have ratified the Convention.

Second, I would like to make a call to action for a greater focus on implementation. We must close the gap between commitments and the reality we see today – the pervasiveness of violence against women in all countries.

Lakshmi Puri

Deputy Executive Director and Acting Head, UN Women

Extracts of the speech delivered during the Council of Europe side event,

“Violence against Women – Our Concern, Our Response” – CSW57, New-York, 4 March 2013



[www.assembly.coe.int/stopviolence/](http://www.assembly.coe.int/stopviolence/)

→ **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW57),  
New-York, 4-15 March 2013**



The 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women focused on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

A delegation of Network members, led by Mr Mendes Bota and including Ms Bonet-Perot, Ms Giannakaki, Ms Memecan, Ms Quintanilla Barba and Ms Wurm, participated in different meetings and

had the opportunity to meet actors involved in fighting violence against women, including parliamentarians from Canada, Morocco, Mexico, the European Parliament and the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development.

The Network welcomed the adoption of the conclusions, which give a fresh impetus to the fight to eradicate violence against women worldwide.

It warmly thanked Ms Michelle Bachelet, first Executive Director of UN Women, for her crucial political role in pushing forward the women’s rights agenda.



against women and domestic violence in Europe and beyond.

**Violence against Women: our concern,  
our response, Monday 4 March 2013**

A side event co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations presented the added value of the Istanbul Convention in the framework of international and regional legally binding treaties. It also highlighted its significance as an efficient and practical tool for governments to prevent and combat violence

**Here are some quotes from the keynote speakers:**

> “I encourage those countries which have not yet done so to sign the convention as soon as possible. Declaring efforts to combat violence against women a priority is not enough. It is high time for action”.

**Mr Gilbert Saboya Sunyé**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra and Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

> «“With regard to the issue of violence against women, we believe that the Council of Europe has done a great deal of exemplary work in recent years, with clear added value, especially since the adoption of the Istanbul Convention.

[France intends] being one of the very first countries to ratify the convention. We have already started the parliamentary process at national

**“There can be no peace,  
no progress as long as  
there is discrimination and  
violence against women”**

*Michelle Bachelet,  
former Executive Director, UN Women*

level so that ratification can take place at the earliest opportunity.

Ratification in France will also go hand in hand with a series of measures to bring our legislation into line with several provisions in the convention, including those on forced marriages and genital mutilation.”

**Ms Najat Vallaud-Belkacem**,  
Minister for Women’s Rights and  
Spokesperson of the French Government

> “From a private matter shrouded in shame and silence, violence against women has turned into an issue that now inspires great commitment at all levels, whether political, national or international.

Beyond political action, however, attitudes are also changing. We only need to think of the unprecedented wave of protests, in India and



worldwide, following the death of a young woman raped on a bus in New Delhi. And there are also popular movements like “One Billion Rising”, which brought women and men out onto the streets in almost 200 countries, on all continents, on 14 February this year.

This convention is not just a form of words; it constitutes a pledge to improve the lives of millions of women.”

**Mr Jean-Claude Mignon**,  
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the  
Council of Europe

> “It is very encouraging to hear so much praise about the Istanbul Convention as the most advanced legally binding treaty, an excellent tool to bring an end to violence against women and domestic violence.

The Istanbul Convention is indeed a pragmatic, advanced and sophisticated tool. But its value cannot be proved by displaying it on a shelf. A tool is made to be used.

The Council of Europe will continue to join forces with the United Nations, the European Union and other regional organisations so that women across the world can feel the real meaning of our mission and community of values.”

**Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni**,  
Deputy Secretary General, Council of Europe



> In my capacity as General Rapporteur on violence against women, I have been in contact with many government representatives recently. They are all willing to ratify the Istanbul Convention but claim the need first to put it in line with national legislation.

This is the wrong strategy. We have already waited too long. We need the convention to be ratified now. Not only for the credibility of our institutions but also for the sake of all the women still suffering worldwide.

I would like to thank Ms Puri who referred to the Istanbul Convention as *primus inter pares* among instruments targeting elimination of violence against women. Tribute should also be paid to the Convention of



Belém do Pará and the people who almost 20 years ago made this astonishing progress possible. We, on the contrary, will not be champions of anything if we do not manage to bring the Istanbul Convention into force very soon.

**Mr Mendes Bota**,  
General Rapporteur on violence against  
women and Political co-ordinator of the  
Network

**IPU at the Commission on the Status of Women**

During the CSW57, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women organised an event on “Tackling violence against women and girls”. It was an opportunity to discuss strategies to prevent, protect against and prosecute all forms of violence against women and girls and aimed at identifying priorities for parliaments to support progress.

Network co-ordinator Mendes Bota participated as a speaker in the session on “Testimonials – Behind a strong political will: parliamentarians’ motivation and responsibilities”.



**Agreed conclusions**

The last day of the CSW57 ended with the adoption of agreed conclusions. After two weeks of intense negotiations and high expectations shared by all actors present, states managed to agree on core principles to eliminate violence against women and girls.

UN Women welcomed the agreement as a “step more for realising the rights and dignity of women and girls. But we cannot stop here. We need to do so much more. Words now