



2018/2098(INI)

5.11.2018

OPINION

of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on Foreign Affairs

on the Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world 2017 and the European Union's policy on the matter
(2018/2098(INI))

Rapporteur: José Inácio Faria

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas under Article 8 TFEU the EU is committed to promoting gender equality and ensuring gender mainstreaming in all of its actions and policies; whereas the EU strategy on equality between women and men provides for the integration of gender equality into the EU's trade policy and foreign relations policy;
 - B. whereas violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world affecting all levels of society, regardless of age, education, income, social position or country of origin or residence, and representing a major barrier to reaching gender equality; whereas, in cases of armed conflicts, women and children, including women and child refugees, are among the most vulnerable groups in society;
 - C. whereas sexual and reproductive health and rights are grounded on basic human rights and are essential elements of human dignity; whereas furthermore, these rights have not yet been secured in all parts of the world, including parts of the EU;
1. Underlines the need for the EU, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the 2030 Agenda, the European Consensus on Development and the Gender Equality Action Plan 2016-2020 (GAP II), to continue to pursue its commitment to developing societies free from all forms of discrimination and violence and contributing to a gender equal, secure, prosperous and sustainable world;
 2. Recalls that equality between men and women is a core principle of the EU and the Member States, as referred to in Article 3(3) TEU, and its promotion via gender mainstreaming, including in other countries around the world through external policies, is one of the EU's principle objectives;
 3. Recalls that the GAP II is one of the fundamental tools of the EU to improve gender equality in third countries; calls on the Commission to take into account Parliament's resolution of 8 October 2015 on the renewal of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development¹ and its resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the Joint Staff Working Document (SWD(2015)0182) – Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020²;
 4. Highlights the need for the EU to remain committed to the full implementation of obligations and commitments to women's rights made in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and to respect the outcomes of their review conferences;

¹ OJ C 349, 17.10.2017, p. 50.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0239.

5. Highlights the need to guarantee freedom of thought, belief and religion, especially for women in faith, who are particularly vulnerable;
6. Observes that the neo-liberal framework is actually damaging to sustainable development and human rights, including women's rights, which are part of human rights themselves;
7. Stresses the fact that gender equality is a fundamental human right and highlights the affirmation of UN Secretary-General António Guterres that 'there is overwhelming evidence that investing in women is the most effective way to lift communities, companies and countries. Women's participation makes peace agreements stronger, societies more resilient and economies more vigorous';
8. Expresses concerns, at the same time, over the ongoing backlash against women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), as well as over fundamental legislation in many parts of the world that restricts rights thereto;
9. Highlights the need to guarantee universal access to the full range of quality and affordable sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and sexuality and relationships education, family planning and modern contraceptive methods, safe and legal abortion, and the recommended antenatal and post-natal care to prevent child and maternal mortality; stresses that the focus on gender equality and women's empowerment is explicit across all the SDGs and that greater efforts should be pursued to seek the full realisation of women's rights and the effective implementation of policies promoting women's empowerment and participation in decision-making;
10. Stresses the importance of viewing access to health as a human right; highlights the need to guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including measures to ensure that women freely control their bodies and lives, have access to family planning, to adequate feminine hygiene products and receive the recommended natal care and to prevent child and maternal mortality; highlights the fact that safe abortion services are important elements in saving women's lives and that they contribute to avoiding high-risks births and reducing infant and child mortality; stresses the importance of access to adequate gender-sensitive mental health services, particularly in conflict and post-conflict situations;
11. Strongly condemns the reinstatement and expansion of the Global Gag Rule and its impact on women's and girls' health and rights globally; reiterates its call for the EU and the Member States to fill the financing gap left by the US in that area using both national and EU development funding;
12. Finds it unacceptable that women's and girls' bodies, specifically with respect to their sexual and reproductive health and rights, still remain an ideological battleground; calls for the EU and the Member States to recognise the inalienable rights of women and girls to bodily integrity and autonomous decision-making and condemns the frequent violation of women's SRHR, including the denial of access to family planning services, affordable contraception and safe and legal abortion services;
13. Calls on the Member States to reinforce the implementation of policies that empower

girls and women, combat poverty and social exclusion and within the framework of SDG 5 and the ILO's 2018 'Women at Work' initiative, focus on providing women and girls with equal access to primary and higher education and training, life-long learning, decent work and equal pay, equal access to financial services and representation in economic and political decision-making processes;

14. Notes that women's rights organisations and defenders are specifically targeted and suffer particularly from the shrinking civic space; stresses the need for the EU to politically support, increasingly protect and raise financial allocations for independent civil society organisations that promote the rights of women and girls in all areas; highlights the need to ensure the protection of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) who face an increase in threats and violence and have even been murdered as a direct result of their activism; urges the EU to take into account the specific protection needs that women human rights defenders have, and all Member States to respect the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
15. Calls on the EEAS to ensure that the outcomes of the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will be included in its policies and will provide a renewed impetus in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls;
16. Stresses the importance of making education and training in the STEM subjects, as well as in the humanities, accessible to women and girls, with particular emphasis on increasing their talents and competences and increasing their participation in STEM sectors;
17. Recalls that appropriate measures should be developed in the framework of education in order to support educational programmes free from stereotypes, to include civic participation, human rights, gender equality, promotion of intercultural awareness and understanding, so as to better prepare students for citizenship;
18. Condemns all forms of violence, such as domestic violence, psychological harassment, sexual exploitation, trafficking in human beings and child and forced marriages, that are imposed upon women and girls within Europe and worldwide, as serious human rights violations;
19. Welcomes the joint efforts and investments of the EU, together with the UN, in launching the 'Spotlight Initiative', aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, while reiterating that violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations; whereas women and girls around the globe remain the most vulnerable to gender-based and sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexual abuse and exploitation which abuses also include political and economic discrimination, domestic violence, mobbing, sexual exploitation, honour crimes, human trafficking, child and forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and rape as a weapon of war; condemns therefore all forms of violence against women and girls; calls furthermore, considering that the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in 2017 estimated that at least 500 000 women living in the EU have been subjected to FGM and that a further 180 000 girls and women are still at risk, for the EU and Member States to intensify their fight against female genital mutilation worldwide and inside the EU;

20. Strongly regrets the fact that, according to Parliament's study on the implementation of the GAP II, current programming appears to side-line the gender dimension in situations of crisis or difficult conflicts; regrets that, among other outcomes, this has meant that girls and women victims of rape as a weapon of war do not have access to non-discriminatory care, specifically comprehensive medical care, including abortion, despite the aim of the GAP II to empower women to have control over their sexual and reproductive life;
21. Urges the Commission and the Member States to tackle trafficking in human beings effectively and efficiently; points out that, as demonstrated by a number of studies, the majority of trafficked persons are women and girls who, once they have reached Europe's coasts, are forced to become prostitutes in the Member States;
22. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to pay special attention to respect for women's and girls' human rights in all trade and partnership agreements with third countries;
23. Underlines the fact that mobbing and sexual harassment in the workplace are also violations of human rights;
24. Urges the Member States that have not yet done so, and the EU, to speed up the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention, the first legally binding international instrument seeking to prevent and combat violence against women, in all its parts, in order to ensure coherence between EU internal and external action in this field; calls for full respect of the Istanbul Convention; underlines the fact that religious, cultural or traditional differences, or any other circumstances, cannot justify discrimination or any form of violence;
25. Recognises the need to address the particular situation of women who face multiple forms of discrimination such as those based on gender identity, race, class, (dis)ability or migration status; calls on the EEAS and the Member States to design and evaluate foreign policies from both a gender-sensitive and an intersectional perspective;
26. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to redouble their efforts to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, including child, early and forced marriage, gendercide, forced sterilisation and marital rape;
27. Emphasises that the EU is committed to promoting gender equality and ensuring gender mainstreaming in all of its actions, which is an obligation laid down in the Treaties, so that gender equality becomes a key priority in all EU guidelines, working relations, policies and actions, including external actions; supports accordingly the related coordinated efforts in the multilateral dialogues and activities of EU delegations such as election observation missions; stresses the need to reinforce the work of the EEAS Principle Advisor on Gender in third countries, aimed at promoting peace, security and fundamental freedoms, by ensuring a specific budget dedicated to her area of competences;
28. Calls on the Commission to include a gender chapter in free-trade agreements with third countries and clauses calling on those countries to ratify and implement the 27 international conventions – on human and labour rights, environmental protection and good governance – listed in the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) and GSP+;

underlines that it is crucial to monitor their implementation, to take action when needed and to pay particular attention to gender equality; highlights that CEDAW is one of the relevant conventions under GSP+;

29. Regrets that according to 2016 statistics only 21.9 % of heads of EU delegations are women³; regrets that only one out of the eight EU Special Representatives is a women; regrets that women constitute only about 25 % of staff in CSDP civilian missions; regrets the fact that there are no comprehensive statistics available regarding the participation of women in CSDP military missions and operations;
30. Notes that adequate funding on gender equality in external relations will be necessary in order to sustain political commitment to this goal; stresses that current funding for gender equality and women's empowerment actions remains inadequate and demands that this situation be reversed in the next MFF;
31. Welcomes the approach of integrating the gender perspective in EU Common Security and Defence Policy activities and underlines the importance of providing adequate gender sensitive training to healthcare professionals and humanitarian aid workers, including those working in emergency assistance;
32. Emphasises the importance of including women, young people and LGBTQI people in peace and reconciliation processes, and the important role that the arts and intercultural dialogue can play in this respect as indicated in the Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy entitled 'Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations' (JOIN(2016)0029);
33. Stresses the importance of addressing the specific needs of widows of all ages in conflict and post-conflict areas, in particular their need for financial and psychological support, and recognises the prominent role they should play in peace and reconciliation processes;
34. Underlines that religious, cultural and traditional differences can on no account justify discrimination or any form of violence; supports the EU's initiative on 'Preventing Violent Extremism: A Gender Sensitive Approach' and pushes for the promotion of gender sensitive projects that strengthen the roles of women and girls in peacebuilding, conflict and terrorism prevention and humanitarian response;
35. Urges the EEAS to promote the role of women in the prevention of terrorism; notes that, as demonstrated by a number of studies, women, as mothers, have the potential, through ongoing dialogue and the fundamental emotional bond they have with their children, to distance them from forms of radicalisation to which they may be subjected and protect them from the risk of mental subjugation by various extremist groups; emphasises that women, precisely because they are a point of contact between the community and their family, can play the role of 'gatekeepers' by providing crucial information that can promote non-violent intervention to prevent possible acts of terrorism;
36. Urges the EU to combat gender-based violence in its activities with third countries and

³ 'EEAS Human Resources Report 2017', published 16 May 2018.

within its Member States, to the best of its abilities and using all instruments available;

37. Condemns the atrocities practised on displaced people such as refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, especially women and girls; condemns the fact that in some third countries homosexuality is still a crime; condemns all forms of discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ people; condemns the ongoing situation where in order to seek asylum in the EU, women and LGBTIQ people put themselves at serious risk of sexual and gender-based violence along routes and in reception centres; underlines that women, girls, and LGBTIQ people who claim a well-founded fear of gender-based persecution need to be able to safely request visas on humanitarian grounds; calls on the Member States to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of women migrants, refugees and asylum seekers such as providing legal counselling, access to health, safe spaces for women and children and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including safe abortions;
38. Highlights the fact that gendered forms of violence and discrimination, including but not limited to rape and sexual violence, FGM, forced marriage, domestic violence, so-called honour crimes and gender discrimination condoned by the state, constitute persecution and should be valid reasons for seeking asylum or humanitarian protection and should therefore be reflected in the new instrument; calls on the Commission therefore to recognise gender-based persecution as valid grounds for seeking international protection as well as to ensure the inclusion of the gender perspective in all phases of the asylum procedure by complying with the 2002 UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution;
39. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen the use of gender-sensitive approaches to meet the special needs of women and girls who are in need of international protection, with a particular focus on providing assistance to girls and women victims of gender-based violence in their countries of origins and along migration routes;
40. Condemns all forms of discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ people; calls on the EEAS to raise and promote global awareness on LGBTIQ rights through EU external actions in order to end the discrimination they face on a daily basis in line with its Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by LGBTI persons;
41. Condemns the fact that women in some countries have still limited access to decision-making processes and so are deprived of their basic citizens' rights.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	22.10.2018
Result of final vote	+: 18 -: 5 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Daniela Aiuto, Maria Arena, Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Heinz K. Becker, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Arne Gericke, Anna Hedh, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Florent Marcellesi, Barbara Matera, Angelika Mlinar, Maria Noichl, Marijana Petir, Pina Picierno, João Pimenta Lopes, Liliana Rodrigues, Ernest Urtasun, Ángela Vallina, Anna Záborská, Jana Žitňanská
Substitutes present for the final vote	José Inácio Faria, Eleonora Forenza, Jordi Solé, Julie Ward

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

18	+
ALDE	Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Angelika Mlinar
EFDD	Daniela Aiuto
GUE/NGL	Eleonora Forenza, Ángela Vallina
PPE	José Inácio Faria, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Barbara Matera
S&D	Maria Arena, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Anna Hedh, Maria Noichl, Pina Picierno, Liliana Rodrigues, Julie Ward
VERTS/ALE	Florent Marcellesi, Jordi Solé, Ernest Urtasun

5	-
ECR	Arne Gericke, Jana Žitňanská
PPE	Heinz K. Becker, Marijana Petir, Anna Záborská

1	0
GUE/NGL	João Pimenta Lopes

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention