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DRAFT REPORT

on a European Parliament recommendation to the Council concerning the EU priorities for the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2025/0000(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

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CONTENTS

	Page
DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RECOMMENDATION	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	7

DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RECOMMENDATION

to the Council concerning the EU priorities for the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2025/0000(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, set to take place in March 2026, its priority theme entitled ‘Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers’ and its review theme entitled ‘Women’s full and effective participation and decision making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls’,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 18 December 1979,
- having regard to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, namely the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ and, in particular, Sustainable Development Goal 5, which seeks to achieve gender equality and ensure that women have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, and Sustainable Development Goal 10, which seeks to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and promote appropriate legislation, policies and action,
- having regard to Articles 20, 21, 23 and 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the Council of 25 November 2020 entitled ‘EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women’s empowerment in EU external action’ (JOIN(2020)0017), which outlines the EU action plan for gender equality for the 2021–2025 period,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 March 2025 entitled ‘A Roadmap for Women’s Rights’ (COM(2020)0097), which reaffirms the EU’s commitment to gender equality,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2020 entitled ‘A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ (COM(2020)0152),
- having regard to Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision

2001/220/JHA¹,

- having regard to the Commission Justice Programme 2021-2027, which provides funding to support judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters, such as training for judges and other legal practitioners, and effective access to justice for citizens and businesses,
 - having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention),
 - having regard to Article 81 (2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A10-0000/2025),
- A. whereas equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the EU; whereas gender mainstreaming and an intersectional approach should be implemented and integrated across all EU policies; whereas internal and external policies should remain consistent and coherent in order to ensure the effective and credible promotion of human rights, democracy and gender equality around the world;
- B. whereas women’s rights and gender equality are not only fundamental human rights, but also preconditions for advancing human development, reducing poverty and building a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world;
- C. whereas access to justice is widely recognised as a fundamental human right under international law, a core concept in the broader field of justice, and a cornerstone for the rule of law and democracy; whereas the EU recognises access to justice as a fundamental right under Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
- D. whereas access to justice for women continues to be a complex and critical issue across all regions of the world;
- E. whereas, worldwide, women remain significantly under-represented at the highest levels of the judiciary and prosecutorial authorities, particularly in leadership positions such as presidents of courts, chief justices and heads of prosecution offices;
- F. whereas the UN actively promotes greater participation of women in the justice sector through dedicated initiatives and campaigns; whereas greater representation of women within judicial institutions has been associated with the advancement of more victim-centred approaches to justice;
- G. whereas violence against women and domestic violence constitute violations of fundamental rights; whereas legal systems must be responsive to the specific needs of victims of gender-based violence by ensuring adequate protection and remedies;

¹ OJ L 315, 14.11.2012, p. 57, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2012/29/oj>.

whereas many women still face substantial barriers to reporting abuse and accessing legal support;

H. whereas judicial stereotyping and prevailing gender norms can hinder justice for women who are victims and survivors of violence;

1. Recommends that the Council:

- a) reaffirm the EU's unwavering commitment to gender equality and ensure that women's rights are fully implemented in all aspects of EU external action through an adequately funded, gender-transformative, inclusive and intersectional approach;
- b) ensure the full involvement of Parliament and its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the decision-making process regarding the EU's position at the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women; ensure that Parliament has adequate information and access to the EU's position document ahead of the negotiations; improve further interinstitutional cooperation, including during the negotiations, so that Parliament's priorities are properly incorporated;
- c) pledge its strong support for the work of UN Women, which is a central actor in the UN system for advancing the rights of women in all their diversity and bringing together all relevant stakeholders to generate policy change and coordinate actions; call on all UN member states, together with the EU, to ensure adequate funding for UN Women;
- d) ensure that European and international instruments are complementary and ambitious, with robust and substantive provisions to empower women and guarantee access to justice, and take into account that the right to legal aid is essential in this regard; ensure that the EU demonstrates strong leadership and adopts a unified position on inclusive and unbiased justice systems accessible to all, particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of women who often face barriers to accessing justice due to institutional capacity gaps, socio-cultural reasons and discrimination; examine the implementation of specific courts for gender-based violence; advocate for comprehensive legal frameworks that protect women's rights and ensure women's full and equal participation under both national and international law;
- e) apply gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting to all EU policy areas, including external action; stress the need for states to allocate sufficient funding for gender-responsive legal aid and support services, especially for survivors of gender-based violence, and sufficient access to compensation, since existing barriers disproportionately affect women's access to justice;
- f) accelerate the implementation of international commitments to further prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, the non-consensual sharing of intimate or manipulated material, cyberstalking, cyber-harassment, cyber-flashing and cyber incitement to violence or hatred;
- g) take action to fully implement existing commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment, ensuring the protection of women's equal human rights and

fundamental freedoms without discrimination, to advance their participation in public life;

h) stress that women's rights and gender equality are fundamental human rights essential to the rule of law, resilient and inclusive democracies, and the core values of the EU; emphasise that it is deplorable that millions of women and girls, especially in conflict and displacement contexts, continue to face discrimination, violence and the denial of their dignity and agency; reiterate that rape remains one of the most widespread human rights violations globally; stress the importance of consent-based rape legislation;

i) promote the representation of women within the judiciary and its governing bodies with a view to dismantling structural barriers perpetuated by a patriarchal and androcentric justice system;

2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and, for information, to the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the European Union. Gender mainstreaming and an intersectional approach must be implemented and integrated across all EU policies, ensuring consistency between internal and external action in order to promote human rights, democracy, and gender equality worldwide. Women's human rights and gender equality are not only fundamental rights, but also preconditions for development, poverty reduction, and for building peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable societies.

Access to justice, enshrined in international law and in Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, is central to the rule of law and democracy. Yet access to justice for women remains a complex and critical issue across all regions. Women continue to be significantly under-represented at the highest levels of the judiciary and prosecutorial authorities, especially in leadership roles such as presidents of courts, chief justices, and heads of prosecution offices. At the same time, judicial stereotyping and prevailing gender norms hinder justice for women victims and survivors of violence.

The United Nations has promoted greater participation of women in the justice sector, and evidence shows that increased female representation within judicial institutions advances more victim-centred approaches to justice. This is particularly relevant in responding to violence against women and domestic violence, which constitute violations of fundamental rights. Legal systems must be responsive to the needs of victims by ensuring adequate protection and remedies, yet many women still face substantial barriers in reporting abuse and accessing legal support. Many women and girls, particularly those facing multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination, experience the justice system as lacking sensitivity to the realities of vulnerable groups.

This recommendation calls on the Council to reconfirm the EU's commitment to gender equality and to ensure that women's rights are fully implemented in all aspects of EU external action through an inclusive, intersectional, and adequately funded approach. It also stresses the need for the full involvement of Parliament and its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in shaping the EU's position at the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

The recommendation further pledges strong support for UN Women as the central actor within the UN system for advancing women's rights and calls on all UN member states, together with the EU, to provide adequate funding. It underlines the importance of ambitious and complementary European and international instruments, with robust provisions to guarantee women's empowerment and access to justice, including access to legal aid and consideration of specialised courts for gender-based violence. Protecting women's rights through effective justice systems builds a path to fairer societies, in line with the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG16).

Finally, the recommendation emphasises the need for gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting across all EU policy areas, for the acceleration of international commitments to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls, and for the promotion of women's equal representation in the judiciary. Women's rights and gender equality are essential to the rule of law, resilient democracies, and the EU's core values, and the Union must show

leadership in ensuring that these rights are guaranteed in practice. Access to justice for all is key for just and inclusive societies and a precondition for substantive gender equality and human rights.