

# The Convention of Belém do Pará and the Istanbul Convention: A response to violence against women worldwide

A Side Event at the 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women organised by the Organization of American States, the Council of Europe, the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations

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Violence is a daily reality for millions of women in the world. It happens on the streets, in schools, at work, in the media, on line and in their own homes. It is routinely used to silence, oppress, restrain and kill women. The examples of violence against women are endless, its victims countless. Many women are too afraid or ashamed to seek help, often paying for their silence with their lives. Three important Conventions are addressing this issue: the UN Convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW, 1979), the Organization of American States Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará, 1994) and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention, 2011), which taken together make up a global human rights legal framework to strategically and effectively address all forms of violence against women. Their respective monitoring bodies constitute a unique opportunity for the international community to identify both problems and solutions.

The Side Event will examine the impact of Belém do Pará Convention in the harmonization of legislation in the States Parties, the potential of the Istanbul Convention as a reference framework for action at national level and will promote the global implementation of the standards of the two Conventions.

## Keynote speakers

- ▶ Ms Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, Minister for Women's Rights and Government Spokesperson (France)
- ▶ Ms Linda Poole, former Executive Secretary, Inter-American Commission of Women
- ▶ Ms Ana Falú, Professor, Researcher and social activist on human rights and gender issues

## Concluding remarks

- ▶ H.E. Ms María Cristina Perceval, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations

## Moderator

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



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## The Belém do Pará Convention

This historic agreement – the first intergovernmental agreement that explicitly addresses violence against women – has given a guideline for the adoption of laws and policies on violence against women in all the States Parties, as well as a policy and strategic framework for its implementation.

The Convention has inspired action and information campaigns, laws and procedures, care models, gender awareness and training processes with legal, health and safety staff, monitoring, tracing and evaluation initiatives, and advisory and support services for women who experience violence.

Despite progress, and the 20th anniversary of the Convention, violence against women persists in the Americas, while American institutions created to face the problem have not produced the desired impact. In its First Hemispheric Report (2008), the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) notes that since the adoption of the Convention “...major achievements in the prevention and punishment of violence against women have been attained, and there is greater awareness on the part of the States on the need to address this issue. Nevertheless, much still needs to be done to make effective the right of women to a life free of violence.”

## The Istanbul Convention

The Istanbul Convention is the first legally binding instrument in Europe to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence; in terms of scope it is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights. It aims at zero tolerance for violence against women and domestic violence and is a major step forward in making Europe and beyond a safer place.

Preventing violence, protecting its victims and prosecuting the perpetrators are the cornerstones of the Convention, as is the requirement to co-ordinate any such measures through comprehensive policies.

The Convention covers victims from any background, regardless of their age, race, religion, social origin, migrant status or sexual orientation and calls for the criminalisation of psychological violence, stalking, sexual harassment, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation. The Istanbul Convention and its provisions stem from the in-depth analysis of problems and solutions tested throughout the Council of Europe member states and beyond: they are good practices brought up to the level of a legally binding instrument. Practical and detailed, the Istanbul Convention is a global blueprint for laws and policies to end violence against women and domestic violence.

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**VIOLENCE**