

**United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-seventh session
4 - 15 March 2013
New York**

INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

on

**"Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence Against
Women and Girls"**

Tuesday, 5 March 2013 from 3:00pm to 6:00pm

Focus: Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls

**Addressing gender inequality and discrimination to prevent violence
against women and girls**

by

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Estonia is a very small peaceful country of 1, 2 million people in the North-Eastern corner of Europe, in fact just a week ago we celebrated the 95th anniversary of the Estonian Republic. Gender equality and women's rights are priority areas in Estonian human rights related foreign policy. As the newly elected member of the Human Rights Council Estonia will continue to promote the full implementation of the *Beijing Platform of Action* and the principles of the *International Conference on Population and Development*. As a strong supporter of the rights based approach, we remain committed to the principle of equality between women and men as a fundamental right. This principle has its roots in our constitution, dating from 1920, whereas the right to participate in elections was granted to women already in 1918. Estonia continues to actively advocate the incorporation of the gender dimension into all UN activities, so that our pledges for gender equality would become a reality. Estonia continues to support the full and comprehensive implementation of the Security Council resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security". It follows our realization that sustainable peace and development are not possible without the inclusion of women. Also, Estonia's voluntary contributions through UN funds and programs and bilateral development assistance aim to support the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

However, women's rights are an issue that needs constant attention and awareness rising. The myths that hinder gender equality are still viable and continue to blur our minds. It is hard to see the big picture, it is immensely difficult to recognise how many faces gender inequality has and how much it affects the whole society. Violence against women is one manifestation of gender inequality, and even if we deny that, it is obvious that this condemned phenomenon affects the whole society. Even more, the whole world.

Woman: "If a man has no mammoth to hunt or war to fight, let him run the parish. And let women stay women, give birth and raise children, and take care of men."

Woman: "I think that every woman dreams of man who is making all decisions for her!"

This is definitely a question of education as well as the question of logical thinking. Stereotypical gender roles are slow to change.

It should be noted that the lower than average earnings of women are a danger for social sustainability – poverty of women is closely linked to poverty of children. Children, in turn, are future members of the society and employ

trafficking as well as domestic violence, we have a rehabilitation centre for women in prostitution and shelters and counselling centres for victims of trafficking. I am pleased to note that victim support services are provided in every county of Estonia. We have 26 national victim support specialists all around Estonia who coordinate victim support. Most of the regional victim support officials work in local police units and therefore the police participates actively in the system. Victim Support Act enacts victim support services and the respective benefits paid. The aim of victim support services is to enable or improve the ability to cope of those who have been neglected, mistreated or suffered physical, mental or sexual abuse. The victims are counselled and helped how to communicate with the state, local governments and legal persons. Victims and their dependents are paid state amends.

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Role and responsibilities of government in preventing violence against women and girls

Estonia firmly believes that greater focus should be placed on the role of men and boys in prevention of violence. To draw more men and boys into actions to stop violence. Media could play an important part to influence the change of attitudes. Awareness-rising can be seen as the most effective preventive measure: it can influence public attitudes and