



44th session of the Human Rights Council

Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women

Panel 2: COVID-19 and women's rights

Geneva, 14 June 2020

Statement by Austria, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland

Madam President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of Austria, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and my own country, Switzerland.

2020 was intended to be a ground breaking year for gender equality. Instead, the pandemic has contributed to deepening pre-existing inequalities, to exposing vulnerabilities and discrimination all around the world. It has become evident that the pandemic is not impacting everyone equally.

Many factors put women at a higher risk in terms of health outcomes and social and economic consequences:

As frontline health workers, women are exposed to a greater risk of infection. At the same time, women and girls are also shouldering much of the burden at home, given longstanding gender inequalities in **unpaid care and domestic work**. Lockdowns also increase the risk of **sexual and gender based violence, including intimate partner violence**. There is also an imbalanced **economic impact** of the crisis and women face high risks of job and income loss. Women's and girls' **access to essential health services**, such as those related to **sexual and reproductive health**, is also adversely affected by the pandemic.

It is hence timely to focus our discussion on recovery and on how we can use this disrupting moment to address gender inequalities.

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The first point I'd like to raise is that women need to have a seat at the table: Women's full, equal and meaningful participation to help shape, implement and monitor COVID responses and recovery is key to building back better.

Second, we all need to improve data collection: accurate and comprehensive age- and sex-disaggregated data on the gendered impact of the health pandemic is crucial to facilitate informed and evidence-based policy making.

Thirdly, it's central to address gender inequalities in COVID-19 economic recovery plans.

Finally, I would also like to insist on the central role of multilateral institutions in building back better. The COVID-19 pandemic has confirmed the importance and relevance of multilateralism. We therefore call on all stakeholders to use this opportunity to recommit to multilateralism.

Distinguished panelists, how can we monitor that Covid-19 recovery plans are gender-responsive and follow a human rights based approach?

I thank you.