

UN WOMEN

President: Sara Ricardo



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I.

LETTER FROM THE UN WOMEN COMMITTEE PRESIDENT

Dear Delegates,

It is with deep pleasure and an immense sense of honor that I extend a warm welcome to each one of you as the President of the UN WOMEN Committee for this year's CERVMUN. Alongside our dedicated team, we are here to offer you our full support throughout this enriching experience. Your presence here shows not only your dedication to global issues but also your commitment to make a more equitable and righteous world.

The UN WOMEN committee, like all committees, presents its unique challenges and profound opportunities. Here, you are called to deeply understand and address global issues affecting women and girls, requiring not just a grasp of facts but also a genuine empathy for the populations we represent. I truly believe that each one of you, by stepping into this role and facing these important topics, is embarking on a journey of significant personal growth.

During this conference, it is essential that we create an environment of vibrant and respectful debate, guided by diplomacy. This will allow us to explore the various topics thoroughly and work towards meaningful outcomes. Your preparation, understanding your country's position and the committee's agenda, will be key to a successful and impactful session.

If you have any questions or require assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are committed to responding as rapidly as possible. As your chair, we are dedicated to supporting you through this wonderful Model of United Nations experience.

All the best,

Sara Ricardo.

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II.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

UN Women was created in 2010 by the UN General Assembly to accelerate the organization's goals on gender equality worldwide. This was a major achievement that brought together four previously distinct entities of the UN system: DAW, INSTRAW, OSAGI, and UNIFEM. The purpose of this strategic alliance was to bridge the gap of fragmented UN processes, which sought to enhance and harmonize its work towards the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women across the globe. This is to ensure a stronger and more coordinated response to these pressing global challenges.

UN Women performs three main functions as regards its expansive mandate. It assists Member States to create a set of global norms and standards of gender equality, which gives an architecture for social progress. Also, it provides essential technical and financial support to countries as they work to implement programs that empower women and girls at the local level. A fundamental aspect of its function is exercising and coordinating its leadership across the entire UN system and ensuring that gender equality remains at the core of all UN work as well as incorporated into development and humanitarian efforts..

Other UN entities make recommendations, but UN Women has a unique and indispensable function in defining the global standard and working to bring it into practice around the world. Its decisions, policy approaches and concrete initiatives provide strong messages to Member States, civil society and other actors to work together to make real gender equality a reality. The proposals are meant to catalyze and enable real change down at the level of individual women and girls everywhere, from policy to practical difference.

UN Women's advantage is having a distinct mandate and a large footprint, which positions it as a global leader for gender equality. It establishes standards, encourages good programs, disseminates evidence-based best practices and connects global aspirations with local realities. Through partnerships, UN Women supports transformative change, helps to advance economic empowerment of women, and addresses the barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential.

III.

TOPIC A: Protection and Reintegration of Women and Girls Affected by Gang Violence and Organized Crime in Central America.

INTRODUCTION

The heart of the matter lies in an important, and often neglected, issue: gang violence affecting women and girls. This should not just be a local issue but a global emergency requiring rapid, shared response. Its effects are felt all around the world. Gang violence undermines human rights, destabilizes communities and obstructs efforts to achieve sustainable peace and development.

It is an extremely serious and complex issue. Criminal gangs especially target girls and women in Central America. The violence against these women consists of forced marriages, killings, disappearances, torture and sexual violence, human trafficking as well as forms of detention that amount to slavery. These abuses which all exploit and are exacerbated by prevailing gender inequalities affect countless individuals deeply scarred and excluded.

Much of the violence women suffer is rooted in destructive social and cultural norms that perpetuate the belief that women are less valuable than men. In addition, some sectors of women and girls are at increased risk due to intersectionality, being subjected to overlapping forms of discrimination, including race and ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Its intersections make them even more vulnerable and open to violence.

This kind of broad-based violence is a major threat to peace and security worldwide. States, that is, have to be held to account when they not only fail to protect their peoples but when they fail to ensure punishment for crimes against humanity. Such failings erode confidence in governance and accompany large scale forced migration and irregular migration. Violence against women is the enemy of building peaceful, stable societies.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The roots of widespread gang violence in Central America are deep in the civil conflicts of the 1980s, especially in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. These wars led to mass displacement and migration to the United States, where many young refugees joined gangs for protection or belonging. In the 1990s, large numbers of youths involved in gangs formed during the war years were repatriated from the U.S. to Central America. With them came gang structures such as MS-13, and later the 18-Sts. The region's strategic location for drug trafficking further contributed to these gangs' growth. Collaborating with international criminal networks, they began a surge in violent crime, kidnapping and terror, and weak state institutions fell.



While male participation in gang violence has received the most attention, and that as both perpetrators and victims, over time it has become clearer that women and girls are also more than their fair share of the suffering. Their lives are marred not only by direct violence, but also by sexual exploitation, forced recruitment, human trafficking, and compelled associations with gang members. These harms are

perpetuated by patriarchal and gendered norms within gangs and wider cultural/societal gender inequality. Human rights groups and UN agencies in turn eventually began to draw attention to those gendered trends, such as the increasing number of femicides associated with gang activity.



The international response has taken many forms and formats. **The Palermo Protocols** to human trafficking granted in particular the vulnerability of women and children in the organized crime sphere. **CEDAW** and its General Recommendations gave increased precisions to the fact that gender-based violence is a type of discrimination and women's roles in conflict and asylum. **The**

Beijing Declaration, which denounces violence against women as a human rights abuse and UN Security Council Resolutions under the Women, Peace and Security agenda which raised awareness of the impact of violent conflict on women and their contributions to peacemaking. Regional initiatives, such as that undertaken by the Organization of American States (OAS), have resulted in more specific reports and recommendations on the impact of organized crime and gang violence on women and girls in Central America.



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Even so, violence from non-state actors, including gangs, is more difficult to pin down. Law enforcement alone is insufficient. Responses must also be preventive, rehabilitative and focused not just on the reintegration, but also on ensuring victims are provided with legal, psychological and economic assistance. There's an increasing acknowledgment that women and girls are not just victims, they are potential agents of change. Attending the problem in a meaningful way demands human rights-based, gender-responsive understanding of the intricate social, political and criminal factors behind gang violence in the area.

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CURRENT SITUATION

In Central America and the Caribbean, gang members are heavily involved in human trafficking, often focusing on women and girls. Girls account for 52% of identified victims,



and women 30%, often subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor, including domestic servitude, childcare and acting as couriers or lookouts for gangs. In addition to trafficking, women and girls face gender-based violence (GBV) before, during, and after migration, with 60-80% of them reporting violence by partners, other migrants, or from smugglers on their journey. For example, the Darién Gap has high

rates of GBV, while two in ten migrant women or girls report GBV, including sexual, physical or psychological violence, this figure is likely under-reported. Adding to these challenges, critical GBV programs in Honduras that rely heavily on international assistance are facing significant financial cuts (60-100%) as United States assistance has been slashed. This makes women and girls even more susceptible to violence and trafficking. International organizations such as UNICEF and the IACHR persist in keeping this situation at the fore-ground, making a strong case for more humanitarian assistance and protection, and the IACHR 2023-2027 Strategic Plan being, in fact, geared towards GBV as a means of promoting human rights.



Unfortunately, some women and girls, who were forced by gang members into crime, are now being victimized again by the criminal process, which seriously obstructs their reintegration to society. The challenge is sometimes compounded by state responses that are repressive, not preventative and rehabilitative, and which fail to take into account the specific gender dynamics at work. To combat this, agencies like UNICEF alongside others have intervened with life-saving psychosocial support and violence prevention programs focused on women and children most at risk, looking to not just end the cycle of exposure but also help them heal.

This problem often gets worse by state responses that prioritize repression over prevention, not understanding how it affects women and girls differently. To counter this, some organizations like UNICEF, have provided important mental health support and violence prevention programs. These are made for women and girls who have been affected, with the goal of ending their vulnerability and helping them recover.



Gangs' hyper-masculine and rigid structures directly lead to violence against women, whether they're members or just seen as objects. Some governments, like El Salvador, use strong security tactics against gangs, but these often face criticism for human rights abuses. Everyone agrees we need better institutions, more prevention, and easier access to justice for victims. Still, political will and enough money for solutions that truly help women are often missing.

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APPROACH AND EXPECTATIONS FOR DEBATE

As delegates, your role is to propose concrete, rights-based solutions to address the specific ways gang violence and organized crime impact women and girls. Your work should aim to:

- Reduce women's vulnerabilities (preventing exploitation, abuse, and harm).
- Strengthen women's agency and resilience (empowering them to protect themselves and rebuild their lives).

You're expected to present actionable steps, not just describe the problem, in the following areas:

- Prevention
- Protection
- Reintegration of survivors
- Justice
- Tackling root causes
- International cooperation

Consider measures such as:

- Empowering women through education and economic opportunities.
- Providing safe spaces, legal aid, psychosocial support, and vocational training for survivors.
- Addressing structural issues like poverty, gender inequality, and weak governance.
- Promoting legal reform and cross-border cooperation for justice and protection.

Your proposals must be gender-sensitive, victim-centered, and aligned with UN Women's objectives of preventing and ending violence against women.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. In what relevant actions present in this conflict does my country participate?
2. Is my country directly involved in the conflict?
3. Has my country been involved in supporting cases of violence against women?
4. What is the situation with women and girls in my country regarding human rights?

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IV.

TOPIC B: Evaluating marital rape laws and victim protection in India.

INTRODUCTION

The right to bodily integrity and to be free from violence is universal. But the right is tragically violated, within marriage, for millions of women worldwide. The spotlight is on looking at the laws of marital rape and protection of victims in India. Apart from being sensitive, this is a hugely pertinent and sensitive women's rights issue that involves millions of lives and continues to stir social and legal debate in one of the worlds' largest democracies.

The issue comes down to legal systems. For many countries, including India, there was, historically, a carve-out in rape laws for husbands. In India, that would mean that a husband cannot be held criminally responsible for forcing a sexual act upon his wife if she is over 18. This legal void violates the bodily integrity and autonomy and dignity of a woman and permits such an awful violence not to be given an answer. It perpetuates damaging myths about the wife as property, her body belonging to her husband, and the harm it inflicts on victims is incalculable.

Although less apparent as an overt military threat, the refusal of human rights generally and violence against women in particular poses a threat to national and international peace. When women are stripped of rights and subjected to violence with impunity en masse, the rule of law is undermined and social cohesion is weakened. This prevents sustainable development. Such sustained gender inequality and abuse can generate wider social instability that harms a country's development and regional stability. The UN has repeatedly recognized that in order for peace to be achieved, there must be gender equality and an end to violence against women.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Indian marital rape exception is the rule (since 1860) that, it is not a crime for a man to have sexual intercourse with his wife, if she is not under thirteen years of age, unless they are judicially separated. The provision, based on British common law, also reflects outdated understandings that also equate a wife with her husband's property and assumes her continued consent to sex simply by virtue of having been married. Even as India became independent and many legal provisions were reformed, this exception has remained almost entirely unaltered, still not granting married women full bodily autonomy or legal protection from sexual violence.



The exception has been subject in recent decades to increasing challenge by women's human rights organizations, legal scholars, and civil society. The dispute has made its way to the higher court system, including the Delhi High Court, which gave a split verdict in the matter, representative of continuing societal and judicial fractures. Opponents of the exception say it violates constitutional

rights to equality, dignity, and life, arguing that such a law is part of a broader transformation under way in Indian society in which traditional marital norms are being re-examined in light of greater gender equality and individual rights within marriage.

At the international level, instruments such as CEDAW, the 'Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women' and the 'Beijing Platform of Action' have regularly called upon states, including India, to criminalize marital rape in their efforts to address GBV. India's record is also periodically examined as part of the UN's Universal Periodic Review, in which several countries have called for reform. Nevertheless, India still encounters serious obstacles in harmonizing its national legal frameworks with international human rights norms, social norms based on patriarchal culture, unclear legal language and definitions, stigma surrounding the reporting and receiving of support to victims. The resolution of these concerns is paramount to the guarantee of women's rights.

CURRENT SITUATION

By historical standards, sexual violence was not a crime in most legal systems when conducted in marriage. But there has been a strong international trend since at least the late 20th century, largely prompted by women's rights movements and human rights advocates, to criminalize marital rape. This in turn means that some 150 countries have now explicitly criminalized marital rape, or eliminated legal exceptions for it. This mirrors an international trend toward recognizing that marriage is not a license to violate someone sexually and that all people, even a wife, have autonomy over their bodies and the right to be free of abuse.

Even so, there are major obstacles on the way. In much of the world, marital rape is still not explicitly criminalized, or laws already on the books are rarely enforced for a variety of reasons. They range from a disinclination by the authorities to pursue such cases, to ignorance in the public that nonconsensual sex within marriage is against the law, and deeply embedded societal norms that see a husband as having an unassailable right to his wife's body. For example, According to World Health Organization (WHO) data, approximately one in three women has been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence during her lifetime. Not all of this is marital rape, but it does indicate how common relationship violence is.



These lingering tensions are playing out with particular force in India. Despite those resonant demands on the global stage, by organisations within the CEDAW framework and at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, in India the jurisprudential struggle drags on

beyond the CIRP decision. Recent events, including the Delhi High Court giving a split verdict on the constitutionality of the exemption, illustrate that the matter is far from being resolved. Millions of women are left at risk under this legal vagueness, as their right to justice for sexual violence within marriage remains unprotected by specific new law. This leaves victims with a huge protection deficit.



APPROACH AND EXPECTATIONS FOR DEBATE

The debate should examine practical, right-based solutions to the legal and social issues concerning spousal rape. Delegates are invited to approach tackling the issues from a human rights perspective, with a gender perspective and from the point of view of the victim so as to suggest not only what is wrong but also practical and feasible reforms. We need to talk about closing the law becoming watertight, support for women and attitudes that would allow rape in a marriage.

Your task is to design and propose concrete solutions to address marital rape in India. Your work should focus on:

- Law reform: Draft proposals that criminalize marital rape and remove the existing legal exception.
- Survivor protection: Create measures for safe and confidential reporting, along with strong psychosocial and legal support systems.
- Justice delivery: Recommend ways to make investigations more robust and reduce judicial delays or loopholes.
- Cultural change: Develop education and public awareness strategies to shift harmful social attitudes about consent and marriage.
- Data-driven policy: Suggest frameworks for collecting accurate, nationwide data on marital rape to guide evidence-based policymaking.

As your chair, we expect each delegate to go beyond simply calling for legal change. Your proposals should address implementation, victim support, and cultural transformation, ensuring they align with UN Women's global mandate to end gender-based violence and protect women's rights.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Does your country criminalize marital rape?
2. Has your country made any recent legal reforms on this issue?
3. What cultural or social attitudes in your country affect this topic?
4. What support services exist for survivors in your country?
5. Has your country worked with the UN or NGOs on this matter?
6. What statistics or reports exist in your country about marital rape?
7. What challenges does your country face in addressing this issue?
8. What solutions or best practices from your country could be shared?
9. How does your country's law compare to international standards?
10. What role could your country play in a global solution?

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V. POSITIONS

1. India: At the heart of the debate questioning marital rape laws, there are internal legal battles to fight and a need for reformation in India. It mirrors the ongoing debate in the country between traditionalist and modern human rights interpretations, giving the reader a rare on-the-ground look at the dynamics of legal struggles and shifting social attitudes.
2. El Salvador: Struggling with the worst of gang violence and organized crime, El Salvador's efforts concentrate on the security and reintegration. It will underscore the need for urgent international support, sustainable protection for women and girls and comprehensive reintegration strategies.
3. Guatemala: While not on the high end of government perpetrated violence, another Central American country dealing with tremendous problems with gang-related violence, Guatemala is likely to highlight the violence-based humanitarian crisis, the challenges of providing sufficient protection and why regional cooperation is needed.
4. Honduras: Confronting profound levels of gang-based violence (which often causes internal displacement), Honduras is likely to seek to share international responsibilities, strengthen national security approaches, and pursue gender-sensitive programming to defend affected communities.
5. The United States: As a world power with considerable influence in Central America (migration, anti-gang), the United States carries a large voice in international human rights and the rule of law. On both fronts, it can do more to provide resources, technical support, and advocacy for human rights-based approaches.
6. Canada: As an advocate of human rights, gender equality and multilateralism, Canada typically supports progressive legal reforms and supports victims. It will be able to encourage global norms of gender equality and support the victims in a full range of ways.
7. Brazil: As a major Latin American power with its own complex challenges of organized crime and gender-based violence, Brazil can also engage in an exchange of experiences on how to fight large organized crime and domestic violence and push for a regional security approach.
8. Mexico Transnational organized crime and internal violence significantly impact the ability of the government to provide security, safety and protection of the population, including

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women who in some cases form part of vulnerable populations. It will illustrate the complications of border security, human trafficking and the need for comprehensive victim protection policies.

9. Argentina: As a Latin American country with a relatively strong track record regarding promotion of women's rights and in legislative advances against gender-based violence, Argentina has potential examples of best successful practices on legislative reform, victim support services and public awareness activities.

10. United Kingdom: A world leader and one of the few common law jurisdictions, the UK got rid of its marital rape exemption decades ago. It could provide historical background on the development of those laws, and call for their reform in accordance with international human rights law.

11. France: As a European power with a heavy focus on universal human rights and gender equality in foreign policy, France could be expected to push for strong legal infrastructures to prevent and eliminate violence against women as well as support international cooperation.

12. Germany: One of the largest economies in Europe, a defender of human rights and the rule of law, and a generous contributor of development assistance. It should endorse international norms, promote holistic victim protection, and perhaps provide financial or technical assistance for reforms.

13. Sweden: As a global champion for progressive gender policy, women's rights, and victim-centered justice, Sweden will push for the criminalization of marital rape and holistic victim assistance. Strongly support the criminalization of marital rape and comprehensive victim support 7.

14. Norway: Norway is a large promoter of human rights, gender equality and international development. It probably will address the need for cooperation among States, mobilization of resources and human rights-based protection and reint/migration.

15. South Africa: A nation that has become world renowned for taking the legal lead in addressing gender based violence and constitutional equality though still riddled with the expectation. South Africa can provide its lessons and best practices in the area of legal reform and implementation.

16. Nigeria: A leading African country who is dealing with its own complex issues of organized crime with limited data, let alone vile crime forms of gender-based violence. Nigeria can provide insight into how to address warfare and protect women and girls in wide-ranging social realities.

17. Egypt: Egypt tends to blend traditional interpretations with modern legislation on women's rights and family law, representing a unique legal and social situation. It will probably, and usefully, provide some perspective on the difficulty of attempting legal reform in an area where there are varied cultural values.

18. Saudi Arabia: The country has a restrictive social and legal milieu on family law and women's rights, and its placement is indicative of a more traditional view of marital relations emphasizing sovereign interpretations of domestic.

19. China: As an emerging superpower with increasing global reach, China offers a non-Western perspective on international cooperation and national legal systems. It generally promotes state sovereignty in human rights, while potentially serving UN Women's more general aims for gender equality and development.

20. Japan: As a large Asian economic power with a distinctive culture and legal system, Japan generally supports international human rights but may have some reservations about certain domestic legal interventions. It may also add to the knowledge base of social determinants and can provide technical solutions to help the victims.

21. Australia: As a developed country with a great commitment to human rights and international development in its region, Australia has strong laws against sexual violence. Presumably, it would promote strong legal structures, provide a full range of victim services, and regional cooperation.

22. Colombia: A Latin American nation with vast experience of fighting organized crime and internal conflict, Colombia has some advanced victim protection methods. It can provide important lessons in terms of demobilizing illegal armed groups and providing comprehensive support to victims.

23. Afghanistan: In a country where women's rights are extremely threatened, Afghanistan offers one of the starker pictures of sheer powerlessness and the complete erosion of the rule of law. It will spotlight the destructive impact of systemic gender prejudice.

24. Finland: With its strong social welfare system and persistent human rights commitment, it's no surprise that Finland is often a leader in gender equality ranking. It can also promote best practices in reforms of the law, social support systems and education to prevent violence against women.

25. Pakistan: A country with an ever-growing population and an ongoing debate on family law and women's rights, Pakistan struggles in enforcing protective laws. It can quote a salient regional voice with India on the same legal and social-battle plane.



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Russia: A country that prioritizes state sovereignty while supporting cooperation against gender-based violence. Marital rape is criminalized in law but rarely prosecuted; first-offense domestic violence is decriminalized. Opposes external interference, favors context-specific reforms, public education, and institutional strengthening.

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VI. GLOSSARY

- **Gender-based violence (GBV):** Harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It's rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power, and harmful norms.
- **Human trafficking:** The illegal trade of people for exploitation or commercial gain.
- **Impunity:** Exemption from punishment or freedom from the negative consequences of an action.
- **Intersectional factors:** The interconnected nature of social categorizations like race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.
- **Mandate:** An official order or commission to do something. In this context, it refers to the official mission or purpose of UN Women.
- **Organized crime:** Criminal activities that are planned and controlled by powerful groups and carried out on a large scale.
- **Governance:** The action or manner of governing a state or organization; specifically, the system by which a country or organization is controlled.
- **Rule of law:** The principle that all members of a society, including those in government, are subject to and accountable to laws that are fairly applied and enforced.
- **Gender equality:** The state in which access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender.
- **Marital Rape:** Non-consensual sexual acts committed by a husband against his wife.
- **Exception within Rape Laws:** A specific clause in a law that makes certain actions, usually considered illegal, permissible under particular circumstances (in this case, sexual acts by a husband against his wife).
- **Bodily Autonomy:** The right of every individual to govern their own body and make decisions about their personal health and sexual life, free from coercion or violence.
- **Rule of Law:** The principle that all members of a society, including those in power, are subject to and accountable to laws that are fairly applied and enforced.
- **Sustainable Development:** Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It often includes social justice and equality.
- **Carte Blanche:** having complete freedom to act as one wishes. It comes from the French words "blank card" and can refer to a signed, blank document that is filled out at someone's discretion. It can also mean having unlimited power or control over a situation.
- **Signatory:** A state that has signed an international treaty, indicating its intent to abide by the treaty's provisions, though it might still need to ratify it to be fully bound.

- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):** An international treaty adopted by the UN, often called the international bill of rights for women.
- **Universal Periodic Review (UPR):** A unique process of the UN Human Rights Council that involves a review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States.
- **Stigma:** A mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person. In this context, the social disapproval or shame attached to victims of sexual violence.
- **Universal Periodic Review (UPR):** A process of the UN Human Rights Council that regularly reviews the human rights records of all UN Member States.
- **Protection Gap:** A situation where individuals or groups are not adequately protected by laws, policies, or services, leaving them vulnerable to harm.

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