



I T A L Y

**STATEMENT BY
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IN CHARGE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

**AT THE GENERAL DISCUSSION
OF THE 57TH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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Madam Chair,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by saying that Italy fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by Ireland on behalf of the European Union.

I wish to speak on behalf of all Italian women: Italian women who are famous worldwide for their artistic, scientific, professional and sporting achievements; Italian women who are less famous but work everyday honestly and passionately; and Italian women who take care of their children and elderly parents and strike a difficult balance between work and family life. But today I would like to speak particularly on behalf of the many women, wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters who everyday are victims of domestic violence and abuse. I especially wish to give voice to the 124 women killed in Italy in 2012. While there is not time to list their names, we are gathered here today also for them.

Their stories and broken lives, like those of other women in many countries, have helped develop both nationwide and worldwide a new awareness about violence against women, which has sadly become increasingly visible, attracting global attention and imposing itself as a political priority of governments and international organizations.

Actions change the world. So it is important to be here today and share good practices, move forward together, and – in line with the Beijing Platform for Action – reaffirm our willingness to further the objectives of equality in rights

and opportunities, independence, development and peace for all women, within sound and harmonious national and international institutional contexts, and in compliance with a common legal framework based on high standards of security.

Last September I had the honour to sign personally on behalf of Italy the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Italy has also recently ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, which increased penalties for perpetrators and ensured greater protection from domestic violence for both women and children.

At the national level, Italy has strengthened mechanisms to prevent violence, ensure adequate assistance facilities for victims and their children, facilitate access to specialized services for abused women, and guarantee women the security and support they need to break the spiral of violence. We also launched specific initiatives in 2012. Notwithstanding the severe economic crisis, the Italian Government allocated significant resources to create and strengthen local anti-violence networks, to support private and public anti-violence centres; to fight against human trafficking. Our aim is to increase assistance and services to victims and to establish new shelters in underserved areas of the country.

As the Minister of Labour, Social Policies, and Equal Opportunities, I recently had the opportunity to visit anti-violence centres in Rome, where I spoke with women victims of abuse and trafficking. They were young women who had been reduced to slavery and forced into prostitution. The only way to restore their children's hope in the future and enable them to overcome their social

disadvantages is through careful, dedicated, passionate and multi-disciplinary efforts.

I am firmly convinced that government actions to combat violence must ensure not only immediate assistance and support but also help create the conditions for economic and professional independence.

They must also facilitate, through quality jobs for women, the creation of work environments in which women can fulfill reasonable career prospects while balancing them with family care responsibilities.

Another related issue is the frequent tendency of advertising to depict the female body through indecent and sexist imagery, even going so far as to encourage violence. The Italian Government has started to tackle the problem in cooperation with communication companies, for example removing over 100 offensive advertisements in 2012 alone.

We cannot underestimate the importance of collecting effective and comprehensive data on gender-based violence and assistance to victims. To this end, the Italian Government has recently entrusted the National Statistical Institute to collect updated figures on physical and sexual violence, stalking, the way violence is perpetrated, and its consequences and risk factors, with a particular focus on the various forms of violence committed by partners (psychological, economic, physical and sexual).

Finally, I wish to recall Italy's longstanding support to the campaign for the abandonment of female genital mutilation. Last December the United Nations General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution, presented by the African Governments, calling on all States to accelerate the elimination of this practice, which violates the rights of millions of girls around the world. Italy is one of

the strongest supporters of the initiative. It is time to implement the resolution and translate commitments into reality. We will pursue this goal with equal determination.

Madam Chair,

We need to work together, at a global and local level, to address violent situations in all their complexity by involving law enforcement agencies, the justice and health systems, and both public and private entities. To combat violence against women, all the stakeholders must join together: government institutions, women's organizations, and NGOs. Nor should we forget the critical role that men and boys can play in helping us to build a world where all women and girls can enjoy their rights without fear.

We need to act on the cultural root causes of such phenomenon, promote full respect for women and also take into account the effects of recent events, such as the economic crisis, that may have exacerbated its manifestation in many countries.

This Commission gives us a great opportunity to issue a loud collective NO to gender-based violence. As a member of this Commission and its Bureau, Italy will not fail to seize this opportunity.