

WAW! - World Assembly for Women - Seminar and Reception in Ukraine

22 November 2016

Embassy of Japan in Ukraine

- Recommendations

Gender inequality and violations of women's rights are among the key development challenges facing Ukraine. In a wide-ranging panel discussion hosted by His Excellency Mr. Shigeki Sumi, Ambassador of Japan, three prominent women leaders, namely Ms. Ulana Suprun, Acting Minister of Health, Ms. Hanna Hopko, Chairperson of Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Ms. Natalie Jaresko, Former Minister of Finance, discussed views on the key challenges and openings for promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women in Ukraine, and shared their work and life experiences about what it means to be a woman leader in Ukrainian society. The panel discussion was enriched by the views and comments of the audience. The Embassy of Japan is also grateful for Ms. Oksana Syroid, Deputy Chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada, who made a keynote speech before the panel discussion.

Ukraine is experiencing a very complex situation, which affect nearly every woman, man, boy and girl in this country. But when you look at the main challenges related to gender inequalities across the country, there are three broad areas that can be highlighted: **Safety, Choice, and Voice**.

Safety. Gender-based violence is a human rights violation with serious immediate and long-term implications. It is wide-spread and systematic in Ukraine. About 90% of gender-based violence cases in Ukraine are cases of violence against women.¹ According to a prevalence survey conducted in 2014, at least 22% of women aged 15-49 have experienced at least one form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.² Yet many cases of violence go unreported. And even though there has been quite a lot of progress on the policy and the legal side, we're not seeing those policies implemented effectively.

To effectively prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in Ukraine, the following recommendations were provided:

- Nation-wide educational programmes and campaigns aimed at increasing awareness among the general public of the different manifestations of all forms of violence, should be launched;
- The implementation of education and awareness raising should target addressing the root causes of gender inequality and violence against women – paternalism, discriminatory traditions, behavior and cultural norms, which diminish the roles of women and girls, limit their opportunities and violate human rights;
- Domestic legislation should enforce restraining orders to protect the survivors of domestic violence;
- Immediate steps should be taken to ensure establishment of a required number of shelters for survivors of gender-based violence across the country;
- Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) as a means of fulfilling the state's obligation to fully address it in all its forms and to take measures to prevent violence against women, protect its survivors and prosecute the perpetrators.

¹ Analytical Report "Gender-based violence in the conflict affected regions of Ukraine", UNFPA, 2015

² National representative survey on prevalence of violence against women and girls conducted by UNFPA/GFK

Choice. In Ukraine women do not enjoy equal access to economic and financial resources and creating economic independence. The dramatic events of the last two years have had a negative impact on the economy of Ukraine, reduced GDP per capita, reduced private, foreign and domestic investment and shrunk economic opportunities for the most vulnerable, such as internally displaced women (note: women make up 63% of IDPs). Due to these factors, coupled with persistent gender stereotypes about the role of women in society and in the household, many women are not able to take advantage of opportunities to benefit from economic growth. Studies document the prevalence of discrimination on the basis of sex in the world of work, including discrimination in getting access to employment, unequal pay and conditions of work as well as violence at the workplace, among others. Horizontal and vertical occupational segregation by gender remains strong, reflecting – and perpetuating - stereotyped assumptions regarding the type of employment and hierarchical position suitable for women and men.

To address inequality present in women's access to economic and financial resources, the following recommendations were provided:

- Elimination of discrimination against women should be made central to the world of work. Raising awareness and disseminating information on discrimination at the labor market and measures of legal redress should be launched;
- Ensuring access to justice for victims of discrimination and addressing the effect of prevalent gender stereotypes on the labor market should be central goals in the work of the Government and other actors (including social partners) ;
- Measures for addressing the challenges faced by women with small children and women returning from maternity leave reconciling their family life with paid employment. Maternity rooms for breastfeeding mothers should be among the broad range of such measures.
- Policy and legal measures should be taken to ensure that entitlement to level and work time arrangements are available to men and women on an equal basis, as well as any measures taken to seek the participation and collaboration of workers' and employers' organizations in devising and applying measures designed.

Voice, leadership and participation. Women make up just 11% of the membership of the Verkhovna Rada. Representation of women in decision-making in the executive branch of power also remains low, with women making up 12.5% of the Cabinet of Ministers. At the last local elections women received 18% of seats in local city councils and 15% of seats in regional councils, and no women were elected as mayor. We do know that it's necessary to have women in Parliament and Government, but it's not enough. When women are not there to influence policymaking, that means that women's concerns and voices are not being reflected.

The recommendations aimed at supporting and promoting women to decision-making positions include:

- Establishing enforcement mechanisms for fulfilling gender quotas for local and parliamentary elections and provision of special additional temporary measures to promote women candidates;
- Developing effective strategies for women's political empowerment and electoral success, through raising awareness and capacity development of political parties and women candidates; Holding nation-wide awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of gender equality in decision-making levels.

- Note : The opinions and views stated in this document were prepared by the Embassy of Japan in cooperation with UN Women and do not reflect the entire views held by the panelists and the keynote speaker.