



Government
Equalities Office

Caroline Dinenage MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of
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Fiona McTaggart MP

By email: [REDACTED]

GEO ref: 2015-0055956

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Dear Fiona,

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Thank you for your email of 14 December, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, [REDACTED] about ending violence against women and attaching a toolkit, produced by Progressio. I am replying as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women, Equalities and Family Justice.

I am pleased that [REDACTED] raises the issue of advancing gender equality through international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Commission on the Status of Women.

The UK Government remains firmly committed to delivering its obligations under CEDAW. We were last examined by CEDAW Committee in 2013 and are following up on their observations and recommendations, some of which required a response before our next periodic report is due in 2017 and are publicly available on the UN's website. As you probably know, the Minister for Women and Equalities has, through the Government Equalities Office (GEO), the overall lead for Government on CEDAW. GEO also leads on the co-ordination of the UK's State Report to the CEDAW Committee and the Government's response to the examination. Officials in GEO work closely with the Home Office to ensure CEDAW's requirements which are relevant to violence against women and girls are implemented, and the recommendations taken forward. This is part of a wider programme of work, whereby such violence is treated for what it really is – a cause and consequence of gender inequality, as Progressio rightly point out in their toolkit.

Regarding the international dimension of this issue, ending all forms of violence against women and girls continues to be a priority for the Government and the Department for International Development has targeted programmes in several countries both to prevent and to respond to this scourge.

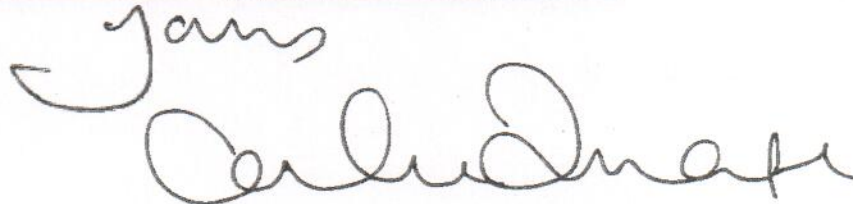
Furthermore, International Development Minister Baroness Verma has just been confirmed as the new Ministerial Champion for Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Overseas. This is a cross-government position dedicated to driving the UK's efforts to end all forms of violence against women and girls overseas.

In the context of CEDAW, the UK Government has called for the signing of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW by more countries around the world. This is an international treaty which establishes complaint and inquiry mechanisms for CEDAW. Parties to the Protocol allow the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to hear complaints from individuals or inquire into "grave or systematic violations" of the Convention.

With regards to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the UK attends every year, sending a delegation which is led by a Government Minister; Baroness Northover was the head of our delegation last March. We think CSW is a key opportunity to ensure the rights of women and girls are protected and promoted globally, but also to exchange ideas on policies around gender equality. This year's priority theme will be Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development, however violence against women and girls will also feature prominently as the review theme, and following up from CSW Agreed Conclusions in 2013.

The Government places a great importance in engaging with civil society in the run up to CSW in March. Our Annual CSW NGO Consultation Event which took place on 9 November attracted more than 100 attendees. We aim to continue this engagement, including through regular meetings with CSW Alliance, an umbrella organisation of UK NGOs who have an interest in CSW.

Once again, thank you for your letter and the toolkit. Please let [REDACTED] know that she can be part of GEO's engagement activities. More information can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-equalities-office.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Dinage', written in a cursive style.

CAROLINE DINENAGE