**Oral statement on the Special Rapporteur on violence against women country report on the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland**

Human Rights Council

29th Session

Item 3

16 June 2015

Mr President,

This is a joint statement on behalf of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Scottish Human Rights Commission, the UK’s three “A” status national human rights institutions.

We welcome the report from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women on her visit to the UK in 2014.[[1]](#footnote-1) As NHRIs we met with the Special Rapporteur and supported her engagement with civil society. We were pleased to facilitate her evidence session with the UK Parliament’s Joint Committee on Human Rights.

We agree with the Special Rapporteur’s assessment that violence against women and girls is a pervasive challenge in the UK.

Like the Special Rapporteur, we welcome the UK Government’s commitment to working towards the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention). Our analysis[[2]](#footnote-2) and that of the Joint Committee on Human Rights[[3]](#footnote-3) highlight that a number of improvements are required before the UK can guarantee ongoing compliance with the Istanbul Convention and with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)[[4]](#footnote-4), including:

1. addressing the impact of funding arrangements for specialist victim support services, particularly at the local level, for disabled women and those from ethnic minorities.
2. providing training to front line professionals in the justice system to improve their responsiveness and sensitivity to victims, in particular with regard to the nature of coercive control;
3. addressing the allegations of discrimination and violence encountered by women in the immigration system, including through amending guidance to raise the importance of female interpreters and to monitor adherence to guidance to ensure a change of culture.

Positive developments by the UK Government and devolved administrations towards addressing violence against women and girls, include a UK Government strategy and action plan for England and Wales[[5]](#footnote-5), strategies developed by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Cosla)[[6]](#footnote-6) and Welsh[[7]](#footnote-7) Governments and a strategy consulted but not yet implemented by the Northern Ireland Government.[[8]](#footnote-8)

We recommend the UK Government and devolved administrations implement comprehensive and co-ordinated strategies to prevent and combat violence against women and girls, introduce robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms to monitor the impact of these strategies, and ensure the provision of services for victims.

We encourage the devolved administrations and the new UK Government to work with all stakeholders to address these ongoing issues.

Thank-you Mr President.

End

1. As the final report is not yet published at time of writing, these comments are based on the Special Rapporteur’s interim statement of 15 April 2014: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14514&LangID=E> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Equality and Human Rights Commission.2014. Response of the Equality and Human Rights Commission to the Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry into violence against women and girls: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/our-legal-work/parliamentary-briefings/response-equality-and-human-rights-commission-joint-committee-human-rights-inquiry-violence-against> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Joint Committee on Human Rights.2015.Violence against women and girls: Sixth Report of Session 2014-15, section 4: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/human-rights-committee/news/violence-against-women-and-girls-report/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Equality and Human Rights Commission, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Scotland Human Rights Commission submissions to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (2013): <http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=GBR&Lang=EN> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Home Office.2015. Policy Paper – 2010 to 2015 government policy: violence against women and girls: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-violence-against-women-and-girls/2010-to-2015-government-policy-violence-against-women-and-girls> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Scottish Government and Cosla 2014. Equally Safe: Scotland’s strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00454152.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Welsh Government.2010. The Right to be Safe: <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/domesticabuse/publications/besafe/?lang=en> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ms Moira Doherty (Department of Justice).2014. *Committee for Justice,* Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/official-report/committee-minutes-of-evidence/session-2014-2015/october-2014/domestic-and-sexual-violence-and-abuse-strategy-department-of-justice-and-department-of-health-social-services-and-public-safety/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)