

# The Kingdom of Belgium

## Positions for the General Assembly Plenary

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### I. Preventing Gender-Based Sexual Violence

Gender based sexual violence, or GBSV, ceases at no national boundaries and is heightened during times of crisis. The Kingdom of Belgium believes the world must continue to work together to eradicate GBSV. Worldwide, per the World Health Organization, a shocking 92 percent of women report having experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence in public spaces. This is particularly true in emergency or crisis situations when women and children are more likely to be sexually exploited in exchange for food or shelter. Women and children also suffer rape in refugee camps and sexual slavery at the hands of combatants to satisfy political aims. Additionally, and particularly in places characterized by immense political stress, GBSV targeting men and boys remains a serious and largely unaddressed issue. Belgium agrees with the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, that “more monitoring and information regarding male victims and the types of sexual violence perpetrated against them is required to tailor prevention initiatives, sensitization campaigns, treatment protocols and services for survivors”. Yet despite the severity of GBSV, only 125 countries have laws criminalizing sexual harassment and only 119 countries have laws criminalizing domestic violence. Belgium, and the European Union (EU) as a whole, support the principles of the Rome Statute which identifies any act of sexual violence as a “crime against humanity” or “war crime”. Belgium seeks further international cooperation to combat GBSV.

Belgium has been active in trying to push international policy in this area in three ways: as part of the international community at large, as part of the European Union, and domestically in the homeland. Internationally, Belgium has long backed various UN efforts to combat GBSV. Belgium supports A/RES/61/143 which intensifies the efforts of Member States to eliminate all forms of violence against women. Belgium also supports the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and recognizes the importance of S/2016/361/Rev.1 and S/2015/203, the latter two of which bring extra focus on the use of GBSV in areas of conflict. Belgium also supports S/RES/2242 condemning GBSV of any kind during war and S/RES/1960, which pushes education as a way of fighting GBSV.

As a member of the European Union, Belgium has also been active in European-wide efforts to deal with GBSV. In June of 2006 the EU adopted the Women in Armed Conflicts and Their Role in Post-Conflict Reconstruction which outlined women’s participation in peacebuilding as well as reaffirmed the EU’s commitment to the protocols in the Geneva Convention. Further, in compliance with EU Directive 29, Belgium supports minimum standards on “rights, support and protection” of the victims of GBSV. Belgian leaders have also been active in the European Women’s Lobby (EWL) which has created a policy document to analyze rape throughout the EU. Domestically, Belgium has been active in both studying and working to end GBSV. The University of Ghent, funded in part by the Belgian government, has founded the International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH). The ICRH has been very active in GBSV policy, including commissioning a feasibility study on sexual assault referral services, creating sexual assault reference centers in hospitals in Flanders, working to prevent violence against and among refugees and asylum seekers, and hosting seminars on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence in the European reception and Asylum sector.

Belgium believes a multipronged approach must be used to combat GBSV. First, given the impact that political stress has on GBSV, the Kingdom of Belgium urges the global community to continue to accept and satisfy the needs of those seeking asylum from war. Second, Belgium implores Member States to train military and governmental persons, peacekeepers, and other influential members of society on how to handle and prevent GBSV. Belgium believes this can be accomplished by providing proper training materials to authorities and peacekeepers in conflict zones as laid out in S/RES/1960, though it is possible that a new UN-funded program in this area could help. Third, Belgium proposes a UN-coordinated global study similar to those conducted by the EWL, with the goal of producing a document cataloging regulatory actions taken to combat GBSV and analyzing which have proven most successful. Attention in the study should also be paid to GBSV targeting men and boys given the understudied nature of the topic. Fourth, following the completion of this study, Belgium proposes holding a 2018 Summit on Gender Based Sexual Violence in Brussels where the main focus will be dissemination of the findings and the development of an international action plan. Fifth and finally, due to the success of the programs such as referral services for sexual assault victims, reference centers in hospitals for sexual violence victims and seminars implemented by ICRH, Belgium recommends implementing actions such as these within Member States. Programs such as these can be funded through the World Bank Group, United Nations Population Fund, and non-profits such

as the Sexual Violence Research Initiative that commit to funding proposals that work to prevent GBSV. Belgium looks forward to working with other Member States to eradicate GBSV once and for all.

## **II. Promoting Universal Access for Sustainable and Modern Energy**

The world must make universal access to modern energy a priority if there are any hopes to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The sustainable energy crisis affects 3 billion people daily. Fossil-fuel-centered energy consumption accounts for 80 percent of the world's energy and two-thirds of total annual global emissions. Approximately 2 million people die each year due to indoor air pollution attributed to coal, wood, charcoal, and dung. Of those, 85 percent are women and children. In 2013, the world spent \$550 billion on global subsidies for fossil-fuel companies and yet with just an investment of \$48 billion per year until 2030, the International Energy Agency believes it can reach its goal of universal energy access. Belgium believes we must set our priorities straight.

The Kingdom of Belgium believes the world must work towards energy that is not only sustainable, but also efficient. The world has already made progress in this area, with 2,300 exajoules of energy saved between 1990 and 2010 because of efforts already underway. To put that in perspective, that is a savings of 25 years' worth of energy consumption from a major Member State such as the United States. Belgium supports the 450 Scenario, which works to hold the increase of the world's temperature to 2 degrees Celsius by limiting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 450 parts per million of carbon dioxide.

Because of Belgium's understanding of the importance of global partnership and goal setting in making energy modern and sustainable, Belgium has supported numerous international efforts in this area. Belgium reaffirms the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Belgium further supports A/RES/69/313 which endorses the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for financial solutions to those in the energy crisis, and A/RES/71/233 which implores Member States to develop sustainable and modern energy. Belgium is thus committed to adopting actions that welcome renewable energy sources, further organizing and upholding federal targets for sustainable growth, and implementing policy to advance companies along their path to energy efficiency.

As part of the European Union, Belgium has taken numerous steps on this issue. The most important has been the Europe 2020 plan. This plan outlines 3 main targets: reduce EU GHGs by 20 percent from their 1990 level, increase the EU's energy efficiency by 20 percent from its 2005 level, and increase EU renewable energy consumption to 20 percent of its gross final energy consumption. To ensure the GHG targets are met, Belgium is committed to the adherence to both the EU Trading System (EU ETS), which puts an EU-wide carbon-emissions cap on over 11,000 businesses, and the Effort Sharing Decision (ESD), which caps the remaining market as whole. Through the Renewable Energy Directive, Belgium has the authority to remove boundaries blocking the sanctioning of renewable energy plants, which, because of a collective effort of all EU nations, resulted in an EU-wide 7.5 percent increase in renewable energy use in 2014 over 2004 levels. Belgium's National Action Plan, created to provide specific policies to meet the 2020 plan, outlines an understanding of the interests of the energy sector while taking into account the environmental implications of such interests. These policy plans include: green certificate handouts to companies utilizing renewable energy sources, action plans for public authorities to purchase green energy, tax deductions on companies and individuals investing in sustainable modern energy, and tax deductions on green cars and charging stations. As a result of policies such as these, the EU is predicted to exceed its GHG emissions goal, and is on target to meet the rest.

Belgium recommends the following CLEAN solutions to promote sustainable and modern energy worldwide: 1) Committing, or reaffirming commitment to, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 2) Lowering carbon emissions through a global introduction of program similar to the successful EU Trading System 3) Encouraging Member States to invest in green energy. For Member States who are affected most by lack of modern energy, Belgium invites nations to adopt the financial program laid out in the Addis Ababa Action Plan detailing an increase in worldwide investment in clean energy infrastructure. To make this achievable for all Member States, Belgium further proposes the implementation of a World Bank subsidiary where Member States can choose to start a green bank dedicated to funding environmentally-friendly energy projects. Based on success of such endeavors domestically, Belgium also recommends that Member States 4) Adopting federal tax deduction policies for companies and individuals who implement clean energy and 5) National Action plans that set goals to ensure a cleaner and more sustainable future. With the implementation plans such as these, Belgium believes that universal modern energy can be achieved.