Reasserting Rights: Countering Transnational Anti-Gender Campaigns

Date: 20. April 2021, 9:00-10:30 AM (EDT)

Background

In recent years and across the globe, campaigns aiming to restrict and undermine the rights and voices of women and girls and LGBTI persons have been increasingly organized and are gaining momentum – in multilateral fora, in national parliaments, on the streets, or in local municipalities. They specifically attack sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as international conventions and norms protecting women’s rights and push for national laws that limit the rights of LGBTI persons at the United Nations, but in many national contexts as well. The term "gender" and related concepts that recognize the broader intersections of gender-based discriminations and inequalities with other factors such as age, race, ethnicity, economic class or religion are increasingly contested, undermining decades of progress and normative gains in the process toward gender equality and empowerment.

Feminist civil society organizations and women’s and LGBTI groups have powerfully raised awareness and countered these developments through advocacy, expert input and mass mobilizations. They have found effective means to express their views publicly, fighting for the advancement of the rights of women, LGBTI persons and politically marginalised groups. At the same time, many governments are trying to counter these tendencies and “push back against the pushback” on women’s rights. They have stepped up efforts to introduce policies that strengthen women’s and girls’ rights and serve to achieve gender equality. Moreover, against the backdrop of the recent rollback of women’s rights and heightened levels of sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, during the Covid-19 pandemic, governments have introduced short term measures in order to not lose time on the path to achieving gender equality.

Germany and Finland in cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Stiftung and the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP) are taking the occasion of the launch of CFFP’s study "Power over Rights: Understanding and countering the transnational anti-gender movement" to organize an event on understanding these transnational anti-gender campaigns, but also comparing best practices and international initiatives to strengthen women’s and girls’ rights and acknowledge their intersectionalities with other discriminations and to implement policies to achieve real gender equality. The event is open to the public and brings together representatives from academia, civil society, international organisations, and governments.

Discussion questions

- Which alliances and emerging best practices are needed to respond to anti-gender campaigns with positive policy measures and concrete projects?
- Which avenues can be taken at the UN and within existing conventions and collaborative efforts (including those not specifically targeting gender equality, such as SDGs, UNFCCC or economic and social efforts) by member states to defend the normative acquis in terms of gender equality and women’s rights? How can cross-regional coalitions be established?
• Are there areas where progress is still attainable also in cooperation with those countries that are increasingly sceptical towards explicit gender equality-focused policies for example in terms of elimination of sexual and gender-based violence or menstrual health or a more socially inclusive post-Covid 19 recovery? What challenges do those cooperations pose?
• How can the advocacy efforts of civil society organizations raising public awareness regarding the surge in anti-gender movements be better leveraged and amplified? What can supportive governments learn through these campaigns and how can they better support civil society actors?

Welcome Remarks

• High-level representatives of co-sponsoring country:
  Germany: Ambassador Günter Sautter
  Representative of Heinrich Böll Stiftung: Co-Präsidentin Barbara Unmüßig
  Representative of UN Women: DED Bhatia

Panel:

• Nina Bernarding, Co-Director of the Center for Feminist Foreign Policy (confirmed)
• Eliza Rutynowska, Human Rights lawyer, Poland (confirmed)
• Florencia Alcaraz, Journalistin, “Ni una menos”, Argentinien (confirmed)
• Dr. Rebecca Sanders, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Cincinnati. University of Cincinnati (tbc)
• Masen Davis, Executive Director of Transgender Europe (confirmed)
• Roni Belenki, LGBTI activist, Israel (confirmed)
• Ndivile Mokoena, GenderCC South Africa (tbc)

Moderator:

• tbc

Closing:

• Representative of Finland (tbc)