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Foreign Affairs says no to violence against women and girls

25 November is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and also marks the start of a 16-day UN campaign against violence against women and girls. This year, the campaign focuses on combating digital violence against women and girls. Foreign Affairs warns against the growing threat of digital violence and is actively committed to ending it.

Digital harassment and hate speech have a major impact on the lives of women and girls and limit their participation in public and political debate. Foreign Affairs has been working tirelessly to put this issue higher on the international agenda. In June 2024, at Belgium's initiative, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution against digital violence against women and girls. Recently, the Belgian Representation in Geneva organised a follow-up event to encourage further international action.

Belgium is convinced that more strategic and coordinated action is needed: greater awareness, more prevention, better support for victims, criminalisation, access to justice and a review of the role and accountability of private actors, including digital platforms.

The fight against gender-based violence: an integrated approach

Despite the many efforts made in recent decades, sexual and gender-based violence remains a widespread problem, including in Belgium. Maxime Prévot, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation, emphasises the importance Belgium attaches to the fight against gender-based violence: *"Violence against women and girls is a serious human rights violation and an obstacle to sustainable development, peace and security. Belgian diplomacy therefore continues to actively cooperate with international partners, regional organisations, other states and civil society to promote gender equality, prevent and tackle sexual violence, support victims and prosecute perpetrators."*

Foreign Affairs actively contributes to the implementation of the 6th National Action Plan, which aims to end gender-based violence. Belgian diplomacy contributes to the implementation of relevant international treaties, supports projects and programmes for the protection of women and girls, funds organisations that address gender-based violence and regularly raises this issue at international level.

The fight against sexual violence in conflicts is also high on the list of priorities. To this end Belgium is working closely with the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Belgian embassies worldwide support UN Women campaign

This year, the Belgian diplomatic network is once again joining the UN Women campaign, which runs until 10 December. The actions of our embassies can be followed via their social media channels.



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