

Improving delivery of justice through gender representation and responsiveness

First and foremost, allow me to vividly thank UNODC and to praise its work now materialized on this new initiative, “Women in Justice/for Justice”, to promote gender balance and gender responsiveness across the judicial systems.

During the past years as a member of UNODC Global Judicial Integrity Network I have had the privilege of witnessing the important goals in the justice area achieved by the Network. It is crucial that the Network, made by and for the judges, continues with its wonderful work; more strong, more engaged than ever before.

The insidious evil materialized by corruption allied to the rule of men - the tyranny of men - driven mad by war and destruction show us how a real commitment towards Integrity and Rule of Law became a decisive answer to preserve a peaceful future.

Ukrainian women judges are now living the same despair than their people, escaping, with sheer anguish, from their country, bombarded and destroyed. As the International Association of Judges clearly stated on February 25th, only the respect for International Law, for the principles developed and sustained by United Nations can avoid the tragedy unfolding in Europe.

It is impossible for me not to appeal for those now attacking an independent country: please stop this horror!

Gender equality in the justice sector is about democratic legitimacy; sustains Rule of Law. For that purpose, like in many other domains, a strong political will is decisive.

Also, the presence of women in the justice sector, particularly as judges, sends a powerful message to younger women and girls about their possible upcoming professional goals. Knowing that women are selected to these positions authorizes the assumption that the appointment procedure within the national judicial system is what it is meant to be: meritocratic, transparent and non-biased. This is the only method to increase confidence of society in those who daily deliver justice.

I believe that our efforts need to target directly men judges along with others critical male actors – lawyers, prosecutors, law professors - who have the skills to address gender-based discrimination. Unfortunately, gender equality continues to be perceived as a women's mission only; gender injustices are present in very diverse organizational cultures due also to the general tendency to undermine this problem, if not simply to ignore it.

The insufficiency of gender representation and responsiveness is noticeable, depending on the national contexts, on three major sceneries.

First, the pure and undisputable absence of women judges, still a widespread problem; then, the well-known deficit of inclusion of women at specific ranks namely highest courts or management bodies for the judiciary. Finally, the persistence of obstacles to judicial careers targeting women, particularly by disregarding their particular circumstances, for instance, as mothers.

Voted President of the International Association of Judges, I decided, since my very first speech, to define gender equality and parity within the judiciary as a crucial priority for my mandate, dedicating, symbolically, the election to the terrible ordeal of Afghan women judges, a matter still of enormous concern to all of us.

The First International Day of Women Judges celebrated today shows the path towards diversity to be tailed for an inclusive future. For this goal, UN can always count on the International Association of Judges.