

Event: UN in Geneva for the UNECE Regional Review of the Beijing Platform for Action. #Beijing30

Statement on behalf of the Holding the Line Coalition

Dear distinguished ambassadors and delegates,

My name is Aïda Yancy, I am a black-European Lesbian from EL*C, the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community. Today I speak on behalf of the Holding the Line coalition - a group of progressive feminist organisations.

To quote Zoe Leonard, “I want a dyke for president. (...) I want someone with no health insurance and I want someone who grew up in a place where the earth is saturated with toxic waste (...)”. We need people with lived experience of discrimination to counter discrimination. And we want a society free of discrimination. We need migrant women, women with disabilities, indigenous, roma and racialized women, youth and gender-diverse people, sexworkers in positions of power. We need multi-marginalized groups to be represented at EVERY level of decision-making.

We have heard time and time again that women should just step up and work hard to get into leadership roles, and we are tired. This narrative overlooks the complexities of intersectional identities, placing the burden of change on marginalized people instead of addressing the systems that need reform. Classism, racism, lesbophobia, biphobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, colonialism, militarism, the list is long.

Additionally, the gender pay gap, the undervaluation of unpaid care work, the lack of access to parental leave and child support, and the remaining barriers to reproductive autonomy severely limit women’s full participation in leadership and decision-making.

Even when women and gender-diverse people get into positions of power, violence, AI powered misinformation, and harassment across all sectors create an unsafe working environment, especially for those from multi-marginalized communities. Too often the threats

women and gender-diverse leaders face are personal, sexual or targeted at their loved ones. This often pushes them to leave their roles prematurely, or opt out of re-engaging in strategic spaces.

And this is without mentioning the shrinking civic spaces and the laws - such as the Foreign Agent Laws - restricting freedom of assembly and expression, severely infringing political engagement in the form of community building and protesting. This includes the crackdown on Palestine demonstrators.

In conclusion, the only way to reach actual gender-equality and non-discrimination in our region is to map out the barriers multi-marginalized people face when trying to access public participation, embrace an intersectional approach and guarantee access to democratic mechanisms.



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