

2018 Vienna UN Conference on Achieving Gender Equality and Female Empowerment: A Collaborative Vision of SDG 5.



UN Vienna-based organizations, the diplomatic community, civil society, NGOs, academics, business leaders and media representatives highlighted their efforts to keep up and meet the challenges of SDG 5 during the Vienna UN Conference that was held on 10-12 January 2018. In order to engage in discussions around “Achieving Gender Equality and Female Empowerment: A Collaborative Vision of SDG 5” the 3 days Conference was divided into three main areas: Women and Leadership (Day 1), Women at Risk (Day 2), Women and Resources (Day 3). Every day, in the afternoon, researchers from the Regional Academy on the United Nations (RAUN) presented their research findings on different topics related to SDG 5.

Discussing about “Women and Leadership”, speakers and Gender Champions highlighted that gender equality is a crosscutting issue and it should not be an SDG, but common sense. Women remain underrepresented in the governments and this is a severe and global problem. However, it was also noted that governments alone cannot reach parity, an engaged civil society is crucial to fulfill political change. Moreover, it was emphasized that women’s participation in development accelerates immediate benefits for communities and that UN Agencies share a strong commitment to implement gender policies with the objective to achieve gender mainstreaming in all



programmes, in all areas and at all levels.

Experts from various fields briefed about challenges of attaining leadership positions and ensuring responsibility to create opportunities for the next generation. Women create opportunities every day and have to be self-confident about being vehicles of change. The role of leadership is going to change, in the direction of more collaboration between different levels, and hierarchies. To conclude, it was pointed out that WHY we want gender equality is clear, what everyone wants to know is HOW we get there. At the end of the session, research findings on the impact of violence and drugs on women and their role as solution providers, were presented by RAUN researchers.

When it comes to “Women at Risk”, panelists stated that violence at home is an issue that has no borders and affects many different countries and it is one of the most devastating violation of human rights. Furthermore, experts shared their findings on why violence is gendered in the private sphere and how support shelters can make the difference in preventing violence. To continue, talking about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the importance of contraception and education of women on reproductive health and rights was highlighted, as well as the strong connection between SDG 5 and poverty. Representatives from NGOs underlined that it is not about giving money, but about giving tools and advocating for contraception and sexual education. Finally, it was noted that the military institution has to be changed and restructured to include the female perspective. RAUN research papers on migration, corruption and environmental issues related to gender equality were presented at the end of this session.

The last session of the conference discussed “Women and Resources”. Speakers talked about gender and economic discrimination, focusing on the pay gap and the difficulties in reaching gender equality because



of societal construction. Additionally, experts briefed about women’s empowerment in the rural area and the access to resources in connection with climate change. Fruitful discussions on women’s role in ensuring common good resources and on engaging women in development and technology inspired the public to pose many interesting questions. It was underlined, that young girls should be empowered and that role models play an important role in shaping perceptions.

Finally, RAUN papers on women in economic, political and development spheres were presented, followed by a graduation ceremony for the 2017-2018 RAUN participants.