



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

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National statement delivered by

Gilles BAUWENS, Counsellor

UNGA 78

THIRD COMMITTEE

**Item 73: Promotion and protection of human rights
Special Rapporteur right to freedom of opinion and
expression**

New York, 12th October 2023

Ms Khan,

Thank you for your report, which underlines the negative impact of gendered disinformation, especially on women and gender nonconforming persons. As stated in the report, freedom of opinion and expression is essential for women's political, social and economic empowerment.

We share your concern about the use of gendered disinformation as a strategy to silence women and gender-diverse voices. Indeed, women's and girls' right to freedom of expression is severely impacted by gendered disinformation. It reduces their public participation and the diversity of voices and views and it weakens democratic institutions and destroys inclusive societies.

Belgium is especially worried about the grave and disproportionate levels of attacks against women politicians, journalists and human rights defenders, highlighted in the report. Gendered disinformation may lead women in public life to leave online spaces while those places should be safe for all. Today, more than ever, in this digital age, this phenomenon significantly curtails the outreach, influence and impact of female public figures and journalists.

Ms Khan, let us be clear that there can be no trade-off between women's and girl's right to be safe and their right to speak. Belgium agrees that we should promote a gender transformative approach to online threats, including by addressing the underlying factors that drive gendered disinformation and gender-based violence.

Gendered disinformation is a global phenomenon requiring action from many different actors. You mention the importance of active participation of civil society alongside with States and companies. Could you elaborate on best practices that can lead as an example?

Thank you.