

UN Women CSW59 Intergenerational Dialog  
March 13, 2015

United Nations Headquarters, Economic and Social Council Chamber  
Stephanie Ortoleva, President, Women Enabled International, Discussant

Transcript (Video available at:

<http://womenenabled.org/csw59.html#CSW59-2> Stephanie)

Moderator: I call upon Stephanie Ortoleva, Women Enabled International.

Stephanie Ortoleva: Good morning everyone. First of all as my feminist foremothers have told me and remind me as I sit here, I of course do not speak on behalf of all women and girls with disabilities, but I merely tell you what they have told me about their lives because we all need to speak for ourselves, and not have others speak for us, which is so often a problem confronted by women and girls with disabilities and by the society in general. I have a few points; I'll try to do them very quickly.

First of all women and girls with disabilities experience violence at a far greater rate than other women and also experience unique forms and have unique consequences of the violence that we experience. Sexual and reproductive health rights and access for women and girls with disabilities manifests itself in many many challenges, not only mere access to physical examinations. For example, the screening that my sister just spoke about - many women with disabilities can't have those because the tables are inaccessible or the mammogram machines are not usable by women who use wheelchairs, to say nothing of the attitudes of the medical community. I could go on about the various barriers confronted by women and girls with disabilities, most significantly the stereotypes we have experienced.

But I also want to address certain issues concerning government reporting requirements for Beijing plus 20. We did an analysis of a small sample of some country reports and I don't know that any of you would be shocked to know that most of these reports never even mention women and girls with disabilities, despite the fact that the Beijing Declaration itself calls upon countries to recognize these rights. I talk about the access of this very room in which we speak to have our intergenerational dialogue. My sisters who use wheelchairs would have great difficulty in entering this room. You may have not noticed any deaf women here during CSW. But mainly the problem has been that there are not sign language interpreters.

Moderator: I am sorry to interrupt but I am having a real challenge with time, so...

Stephanie Ortoleva: So just one last comment, please. Women and girls with disabilities are women too. We call upon the women's movement, UN Women and our government actors to not forget us as we are often the forgotten sisters in these dialogues. Thank You.

Applause...