



SI PRESIDENT
Sharon Fisher

Date: **/**/****

SI PRESIDENT ELECT
Maureen Maguire

Dear _____,

SI TREASURER
Kathy King

Soroptimist International (SI) endorses the adoption of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention 190 (C190), regarding the elimination of violence and harassment in the workplace. SI urges all Member States of the United Nations (UN) to ratify C190, and to take decisive action towards effective implementation without delay.

SI DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY
Beverly Bucur

GLOBAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Deborah Thomas

Soroptimist International is a non-governmental organisation in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 1984. Our global organisation consists of Soroptimist International of the Americas, Soroptimist International of Europe, Soroptimist International of Great Britain & Ireland, Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific, and Soroptimist International of Africa. SI operates as a global volunteer movement working together to transform the lives of women and girls. Our network of 72,000 club members in 121 countries works at a local, national, and international level to educate, empower, and enable opportunities for women and girls.

Many studies have demonstrated that violence and harassment is a persistent problem affecting all countries, sectors, and occupations around the world. This violation of human rights affects the ability of victims to reach their full potential, in both the professional and personal spheres. While it can affect anyone, violence and harassment in the workplace particularly affects women, and more acutely those with low socio-economic status, indigenous women, women from ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ women, migrant workers, women with disabilities, and young women. Violence and harassment in the workplace reinforces stereotypes about the victim's abilities, negatively impacting on the physical, mental, social, and economic well-being of those affected.

Further to the significant cost to the victim, violence and harassment in the workplace has a profoundly negative effect on profitability due to "large monetary costs for governments and employers, particularly in terms of medical care and counselling, lost productivity, case settlement and judicial monetary awards"¹. Moreover, violence and harassment in the workplace frequently results in fewer women entering or remaining in the labour market, this is to the detriment of the individual victim, and the wider community. In many sectors, violence and harassment in the workplace causes whole

¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/briefingnote/wcms_738115.pdf

intersections of the population to withdraw from positions justly within their level of training and expertise. Violence and harassment in the workplace bears a clear correlation to gender equity relating to pay, career progression, and occupational segregation. Member States must act to remedy this if they are to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The COVID-19 crisis catalysed a rise in workplace violence and harassment. Due to worsening socio-economic developments, vulnerability to work-related violence is increasing. Increased risks faced by workers include, inter alia, domestic violence affecting those working from home, on-line violence in the virtual workspace, and enforced health risks faced by frontline workers in the health, care, agriculture, food-production, processing, and distribution sectors. These risks are magnified by the current crisis and further intensified by the absence of appropriate standards in monitoring and accountability measures. Now, more than ever before, governments must act to protect all people from violence and harassment in the workplace.

The ratification and immediate implementation of ILO C190 and accompanying Recommendation 206 is an essential step towards building a safer, inclusive, and more productive workforce. These documents should be utilised as an overarching blueprint for effective legislation and policy making towards combating violence and harassment in every workplace, including virtual and physical spaces across the formal and informal labour force, irrespective of an individual's contractual status.

SI encourages Member States to ensure that workplaces be free from harassment and violence, and be founded in dignity and human rights, cultivated by good quality gender-sensitive training, inclusion, and equality. Member states must ensure that employers are proactive in upholding occupational safety and must provide adequate redress of victims of violence and harassment in the workplace. Reporting mechanisms must be safe and accessible, and accountability measures must be supported by legislation.

Ratification of ILO C 190 is aligned with the UN's endorsement of human rights and non-violence and reinforces the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, while addressing the Critical Areas of Concern listed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

For these reasons, Soroptimist International urges all Member States to join those Governments that have ratified the Convention, in adopting and adhering to these ILO standards aimed at addressing violence and harassment in the world of work.

Yours Sincerely,



Sharon Fisher

Soroptimist International President 2020-2021