

Statement by Dr. Mojtaba Rezakhah, Leader of the Iranian
Delegation
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Mr. President
Distinguished Colleagues,

The most important first step to help women, is perhaps, to listen to their stories and wonder how the end could've been different had they been given the chance to think and start differently.

Like the story of the south Asian woman migrating alone to a Persian Gulf country to help provide for her family, but finds herself stuck at her employee's house, enslaved, abused, and unable to return home.

Or the story of the misguided American woman joining the military hoping to gain strength and serve her country but is made to face a whole different battle when she is raped by her officer.

Or the story of the European woman joining a well-known company to become economically independent, but then she's expected to do different tasks and favors than her male counterparts.

And these, ladies and gentlemen, are not the exception. Reports show that 1 in 4 American women in military are assaulted by someone in their chain of command. When it comes to the workforce according to one survey 38% had been harassed. We also know that these violent crimes largely go unreported and so the situation is much more dire than shown by these numbers.

Now, steps have been taken by governments and international organizations, to decrease these instances through ways such as helping more women report instances of abuse. And yet, despite all these efforts, we continue to face a global crisis.

So, perhaps, it's time we wondered if the reason we don't seem to be able to put an end to most of these tragic stories, is that we haven't been reading them right: that we've started in the middle and not from the start. Because every one of those women who we talked about, was one day born in a family and raised with a set of teachings. And as the world becomes more and more a global village and these teachings come more from mainstream media propagating liberal ways of life, many young girls are being raised with a different selection of ideas, values and fears than the ones in their own often rich cultures and wise traditions: The fairly recent idea for instance, that in order to be strong, a woman must serve in all the same ways as do men, the value that is doing any job regardless of their vulnerable to the specific risks as women, and the fear that if they are not economically independent from their fathers and husbands, they will be subjected to oppression and abuse.

In my country, the Islamic republic of Iran, we listen to women's stories from the start. And so we realize that in order to empower them, we need to organize our efforts in a way that creates more possibilities for them since birth.

Our policies are focused on facilitating marriages to help committed relationships, empowering heads of the family financially to prevent women having to work under unsafe circumstances, and providing safe spaces for women to study and work throughout their lives. Today, more than 70 percent of our university students are women, and millions work in a range of jobs as teachers, doctors, entrepreneurs, lawyers, policewomen, firefighters and more. And this family-oriented approach, we

believe, has been helping Iranian women reach their fullest potential without worrying about being alone in their endeavors.

But instead of being praised for their achievements and recognized for this successful approach, Iranian women, have been portrayed as oppressed creatures without enough agency to control their own lives, let alone create a positive change in their world. What's worse is that this propaganda has been used to place further politically-motivated sanctions on Iranians and deprive these same women and their families. Iranian EB patients and others who often cannot access certain essential medicine as a direct result of these sanctions. Ms. Mahsa Amini who died with a preexisting medical condition following police custody for instance, had struggled to find the essential medicines following her brain surgery in childhood, due to these very same sanctions.

Iranian women have been through so much.

Decades ago, they gave their all to topple a western-supported dictator and become independent. And soon after they voted for an Islamic Republic with a 98.2% majority, their country was attacked by a U.S ally, Iraq's Baathist regime and they defended their country with empty hands.

And ever since, they've been braving back breaking illegal and inhuman unilateral coercive measures and sanctions, placed on them only because they dared to choose their own destiny. And in all their fights, they've had and will continue to have their men's full support.

You see, Iranian women have been fighting their own battles and telling their own stories. Stories that start with the family. Stories in which the battle is between the imperialists and nations seeking the right to self-determination, between the 1% and the 99%, not between men and women!

Thank you very much