

41st Session of the Human Rights Council
Joint Statement on Accountability for the Rights of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Settings
Item 8 General Debate

8th of July, 2019

Thank you Mr. President,

I have the honour to deliver this joint statement on behalf of 46 countries.

Ensuring accountability for human rights violations and abuses perpetrated against women and girls is central to fulfilling human rights obligations.

Human rights accountability in this context goes beyond criminal justice and includes principles of participation, transparency, empowerment, sustainability, international assistance and non-discrimination. It enables a survivor-focused approach and puts women and girls themselves at the center of all interventions, emphasizing their agency.

Conflict situations and humanitarian emergencies have dire consequences on women and girls' enjoyment of human rights, exacerbating pre-existing structural patterns of discrimination and inequalities, and making them particularly vulnerable to human rights violations and abuses such as, sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, child, early and forced marriage, forced pregnancy and to higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity. Women and girls with disabilities, indigenous women and girls, and women and girls from ethnic and religious minorities are particularly exposed to targeted violence, exploitation and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence.

Disintegrating judicial systems, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and the stigma associated with sexual and gender-based violence as well as with seeking access to quality and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, all prevent women and girls from reporting, seeking accountability and participating in decisions affecting their lives.

International human rights and political bodies have recognized that accountability requires independent monitoring, prompt investigation and punishment of perpetrators as well as legal and policy shifts in order to prevent future violations.¹

This should include the removal of legal, structural and systemic barriers and other discriminatory measures and policies, identifying and addressing their disproportionate impact on women and girls and the differential impact of national state practices and immigration policies on them, particularly on those facing displacement. This should also include the development and enforcement of policies and legal frameworks that respect women and girls' rights to bodily autonomy and bodily integrity, guarantee universal access to education, sexual and reproductive health information, care and services, including access to safe abortion.

¹ CEDAW, General Recommendation 30, paras. 77-79; *See generally* United Nations General Assembly Res. 60/147, *Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law*, A/RES/60/147 (21 March 2006) para. 3 (b)

Remedies must aim to restore the rights of victims of violations and must include adequate, effective, and prompt reparation including guarantees of non-recurrence. All mechanisms should be informed by effective and meaningful participation of women and girls, in order to ensure that they are gender, and age-sensitive, and take into consideration multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and context-specific factors, that necessitate distinct responses and measures.

Building on the joint statement read in March 2019 lead by Mexico and Finland on rights-based accountability and co-sponsored by 59 States, the co-sponsors of this statement therefore urge the Human Rights Council to incorporate and mainstream the issue of accountability for human rights violations and abuses against women and girls in humanitarian settings in its agenda and to address structural inequalities by including conflict gender, and age analysis in its work in humanitarian settings, including in the mandates of commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions.

1. Albania
2. Australia
3. Austria
4. Belgium
5. Bulgaria
6. Canada
7. Chile
8. Cyprus
9. Denmark
10. Estonia
11. Fiji
12. Finland
13. France
14. Georgia
15. Germany
16. Greece
17. Iceland
18. Italy
19. Japan
20. Latvia
21. Liechtenstein
22. Lithuania
23. Luxemburg
24. Mexico
25. Mongolia
26. Montenegro
27. Netherlands
28. New Zealand
29. Norway
30. Palestine
31. Peru
32. Portugal

33. Republic of Korea
34. Republic of Moldova
35. Romania
36. Slovakia
37. Slovenia
38. Spain
39. Sweden
40. Tunisia
41. Turkey
42. Ukraine
43. Uruguay
44. Switzerland
45. Czech Republic
46. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland