

Joint Statement

Delivered by Denmark

Human Rights Council 44th session

Protecting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights during the COVID-19 crisis

[Check against delivery]

Mdm. President,

I am honored to deliver this cross-regional statement on behalf of 56 States.

The world is facing a crisis of immense magnitude. COVID-19 is detrimental to health systems, economies, and lives as it spreads across regions and populations.

We now know the consequences of COVID-19 disproportionately affect women and girls. They are more exposed as primary caretakers in households and as frontline health workers. Pregnant women and those who have just given birth are particularly vulnerable to the virus.

Women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights are under immense pressure in this global crisis. Restrictive measures to limit the spread of the virus increase the risk of sexual and gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, and harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation and child, early and forced marriage. Health and social protection and legal systems that under normal circumstances would protect women and girls are weakened or under pressure. Already existing barriers are intensified, such as negative social norms, gender-based discrimination, and lack of access to essential health services.

It is **critical** that women's and girls' health and rights are integrated in all COVID-19 responses. Women and girls in all their diversity must be involved in all decision-making processes to ensure responses are gender-responsive and do not further discriminate or exclude those most at risk.

It is **critical** that organizations dedicated to ensure women and girls' access to health services are fully equipped and able to carry out their lifesaving work.

And it is **critical** that access to essential sexual and reproductive health services continues throughout and after the crisis.

We fully support OHCHR, UNFPA, UN Women, WHO and others in their efforts towards a coherent global response to COVID-19. We encourage them to work with governments and other partners to ensure the protection of women and girls' rights, an effective response and continued access to all essential health services.

Finally, we call on all governments to join us in support of a global emergency response, which ensures women's and girls' continued right to decide over their own body.

Thank you.

Co-signatures:

1. Albania
2. Argentina
3. Armenia
4. Australia
5. Austria
6. Belgium
7. Bosnia and Herzegovina
8. Botswana
9. Bulgaria
10. Canada
11. Chile
12. Croatia
13. Cyprus
14. Czech Republic
15. Denmark
16. Ecuador
17. Estonia
18. Fiji
19. Finland
20. France
21. Georgia
22. Germany
23. Greece
24. Iceland
25. Ireland
26. Israel
27. Italy
28. Japan
29. Kazakhstan
30. Latvia
31. Lebanon
32. Lithuania
33. Liechtenstein
34. Luxembourg
35. Malta
36. Mexico
37. Monaco
38. Montenegro
39. Netherlands
40. New Zealand
41. North Macedonia
42. Norway
43. Panama
44. Peru
45. Portugal
46. Republic of Korea
47. Romania
48. San Marino
49. Slovenia
50. Spain
51. Sweden
52. Switzerland
53. Tunisia
54. Ukraine
55. United Kingdom
56. Uruguay