

Human Rights Council – 37th Session

Full Day Meeting: Rights of the Child

5 March 2018

Joint Statement

I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of over 30 States, including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay and Zambia.

Protecting and promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights is critical to empower women and girls, and reduce maternal and child mortality around the world. Ensuring access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services saves the lives of women, men and children.

Evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is key to realising improved sexual and reproductive health, and ensuring sexual and reproductive rights for all. CSE helps young people make informed decisions and develop safe and respectful behaviours. It promotes gender equality and protects the health and well-being of all young people.

The sexual and reproductive health and rights of people living in humanitarian settings, particularly women and girls, require special attention. Sixty per cent of preventable maternal deaths occur in humanitarian and fragile settings, with more than 500 women and girls dying daily from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. Women and girls in these settings experience increased vulnerability to exploitation and sexual violence, often with little or no access to contraception or other reproductive health and psychosocial services.

Quick, inclusive and equitable scaling-up of sexual and reproductive health services during humanitarian events helps meet the sexual and reproductive health needs and rights of women and girls. This saves lives. It also reduces the economic and social impact of disasters, and enables communities to recover more quickly. Ensuring that women are consulted and have a voice improves the effectiveness of responses.

We would welcome the panel's views on what more the international community can do to ensure the provision of these services in humanitarian situations.

319 words