

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

HARMFUL PRACTICES EVENT AT THE SIXTY SECOND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN: ACCELERATING EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE FGM AND CHILD, EARLY and FORCED MARRIAGE IN AFRICA BY 2030

Venue: ECOSOC Room

Date: 14 March 2018

Time: 8:15 – 9:45 am

Background and Purpose

The African continent is undergoing a profound demographic shift that will see the child population grow by more than 67 percent over the next 35 years. Within this population is the African adolescent girl. In the Africa, today, she will grow up in a world where girl's education has improved, more women have joined the formal labor market, progress in key health arenas including maternal mortality has been reduced and greater access to essential services has been realized. What has not been addressed though are the deeply embedded patriarchal norms that pervade across all levels at national, community and individual levels, and continue to be key blockages for actualizing a transformative reality for women and girls across the continent. These norms and structural factors related to economic, social and cultural inequalities have resulted in harmful practices against the adolescent girl such as FGM/C and Child Marriage.

In response, the continent has made many advances for women's and girls' human rights and gender equality. There is an impressive landscape of binding agreements, numerous measures as well as recommendations and reports addressing the human rights of women¹ including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; and the Protocol on the Statute of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights. There are also several instruments and monitoring bodies committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of women on the continent. These include, inter alia, the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, The African Union Gender Policy and Agenda 2063. Regional political organizations have also adopted protocols and resolutions as well as issued declarations pertaining to the protection and promotion of women's human rights, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Corresponding investments at country level have yielded positive results. The practice of FGM/C has been declining over the past three decades. In countries with nationally representative data, around one in three girls aged 15 to 19 today have undergone the practice, versus one in two in the mid-1980s. However, not all countries have made progress and the pace of decline has been uneven. Even if the rate of progress achieved over the past 30 years is sustained, the number of girls affected is estimated to reach close to 235 million by 2030. Child marriage levels have also decreased compared to earlier generations. Twenty-five years ago, nearly half were married before age 18 and about one in six were married before age 15. Most notably, in Ethiopia the prevalence rate of child marriage has dropped from around 60 per cent to around 40 per cent in ten years and in Guinea-Bissau it has dropped from around 40 per cent to around 25 per cent in the last decade. Despite this positive landscape, 125 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday across Africa. At least 200 million girls and women alive today living in 30 countries have undergone FGM/C. Such practices are rooted in cultural and social norms that are upheld by underlying patriarchy that dictates gender structures and power relations, and they are often used as a means of controlling women and girls' choices and expressions. Measures should be put in place to address the root causes, systematic and underlying factors such as poverty, lack of education for the girl child, need to improve the legal and policy environment to protect children amongst other interventions.

It is against this background that the Governments of Zambia and Burkina Faso with support from UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women will host an event which will provide an opportunity for the member states to renew their commitments and accelerate efforts to eliminate child marriage and FGM/C in Africa by 2030. This event will complement others sessions during the meeting by the Governments of Ethiopia, Uganda and Zambia.

Objective

- To create a platform for Member States, the African Union and development partners to dialogue, showcase country progress and renew continental efforts to eliminate child marriage and FGM/C as Africa's contribution to SDG 5.3 by 2030.

Format and Participation:

An interactive session convened by the Governments of Uganda, Zambia and Ethiopia with support from UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, the AUC, and other partners. The event will feature select Member States, civil society organisations and young people.

The proposed session **which is yet to be confirmed consist of the following:**

Moderator for the session, UNICEF Executive Director

Segment 1 (20 minutes) – Opening remarks

- Government of Zambia
- Government of Burkina Faso
- UN Women Executive Director
- 2-minute video on Child Marriage and FGM

Segment 2 (20 minutes) – Interactive Dialogue with guiding questions

- Government of Ethiopia
- Government of Uganda
- African Union
- UNFPA Executive Director

Segment 3 (20 minutes) – Interactive Session

- Government of Italy
- Government of Gambia
- Government of Uganda
- Jaha Dekureh – UN Women Regional Goodwill Ambassador

Q&A (5 minutes)

Closing Session – UNFPA Executive Director

Expected Outcomes:

- Renewed partnership to eliminate child marriage and FGM/C in Africa which will be articulated through short time bound statements by Member States prior to the meeting.

Contact: For further information on the event, please contact:

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