

Coalition for Adolescent Girls CSW Oral Statement

I am an adolescent girl and I address you today on behalf of the Coalition for Adolescent Girls, a network of over 40 civil society organizations working on behalf of girls like me.

I am an adolescent girl.

I stand in a gap. I am no longer a child but I am not yet a woman: my needs are unique.

I live in every village, every town, every city and every region of the world, although you may have to look hard to find me – I may be out of school, already married or working in someone's home with no ability to leave.

I have a voice but it is often not heard.

I have opinions but it is rare that I am asked to share them.

Ask me what it means to be an adolescent girl where I live.

When adolescent girls are safe, educated, healthy and empowered, we can create lasting change within our communities and end generations of poverty.

All forms of violence against adolescent girls reinforce overall ill health and diminish our ability to fully realize our rights, obtain a quality education, become an economically productive member of society, and actively participate in civic life.

The people and institutions charged with taking care of us, often fail to do so.

Adolescent girls are subjected to female genital mutilation in preparation for marriage.

Adolescent girls are treated as pieces of property - sold or traded into early marriage. Every year 14 million of us are married before we turn 18.

Adolescent girls are sexually assaulted - by soldiers, peacekeepers, teachers, the police, our parents, and our husbands.

Adolescent girls are trafficked into sexual slavery - sold by those who make money from our bodies.

Adolescent girls are made pregnant while our bodies are still developing - while we are too young to give birth. Too many of us are dying.

Adolescent girls are subjected to domestic and intimate partner violence.

Adolescent girls often do not know or have access to information about our sexual and reproductive rights or how to make healthy and informed choices concerning our bodies.

Help us care for our health and you will improve the lives of the children we may choose to have in the future.

Involve our families, religious leaders, teachers, men, boys, women and girls in shifting the cultural norms from those that condone violence against adolescent girls to those that prevent and punish violence against us.

We count. Include adolescent girls in your programming and your measures of success.

Education and financial literacy empower us.

We want to learn: educate us.

Ask us if your programs are effective and if they meet our needs or have an impact on our lives.

We are adolescent girls. We are not invisible.

We want you to collect and share the data that tells our stories.

We have the right to live a life free from violence.

Enact **and** enforce laws that protect our rights.

We need real access to justice when our rights are violated.

I am an adolescent girl.

Adolescent girls are asking you, the Member States, to commit to developing a global implementation plan of all the treaties and laws that already exist to end violence against us, and all women and girls.

We are adolescent girls. Hear us.