

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

Mdm. President,

I am honored to deliver this cross-regional statement on behalf of [...] countries.

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

We now know its consequences disproportionately affects women and girls. They are more exposed as primary caretakers in households and as primary 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 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 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 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 woman 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 rights are protected, 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 continues to ensure women and girls' right to decide over their own body.

Thank you.