

INTER-REGIONAL COALITION TO END FGM

Joint Statement

Brussels – Addis Ababa – Kuala Lumpur – Washington, 29 November 2018 : In the aftermath of the presentation of the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) [report](#) on ‘Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation’ at the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), regional civil society networks combating female genital mutilation (FGM) welcome this important document as well as the UNGA [resolution](#) on FGM and reaffirm their commitment to scale up efforts to end this traditional harmful practice worldwide through increasing their cross-regional cooperation.

The undersigned organisations welcome the latest UNSG Report and subsequent UNGA resolution on ‘Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation’ and would like to shine a spotlight on such a strong report underscoring some key issues for our work to end this harmful practice worldwide. The Secretary General Mr. Antonio Guterres first and foremost reaffirmed that FGM is a form of violence against women and girls and a manifestation of gender inequality that undermines “women and girls’ human rights, along with their physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health” (para 1).

His report strongly stressed the importance of tackling the **worldwide prevalence** of FGM, which affects all continents, and highlighted some newly gathered data concerning Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Australia (paras 15, 16, 18). We welcome such emphasis put on countries and regions that are not traditionally associated with the practice, since it is important to continue acknowledging FGM as both an African issue, and a global one. This guarantees that no woman and girl is left behind when implementing actions to end this practice.

The UN Secretary General also stressed the **sense of urgency** surrounding the work towards the abandonment of FGM (paras 20, 21), by recalling the latest data by UNFPA, which state that if current trends continue in the direction they are moving in, **68 million girls will undergo FGM between 2015 and 2030**. These new figures, which are linked to estimated population growth in FGM-practicing communities, project the current estimates of 3.9 million girls cut each year to 4.6 million by 2030, unless massively scaled-up efforts are taken urgently to prevent that from happening.

“We are clearly at a turning point, where if we do not increase our efforts towards the abandonment of FGM, all progress made in the past three decades in terms of reduction of prevalence rates, will be dramatically reverted. It takes a world to end FGM and we all need to grab this momentum and build bridges among us to bring it to an end”, said Fiona Coyle, Director of the End FGM European Network.



In this sense, our organisations deem it very important that the UNSG report stressed the power of **coordination to achieve the eradication of FGM by 2030** (para 71) in order to effectively address the cross-border nature of this practice. To effectively tackle the global dimension of FGM we need to develop transnational interventions, measures with a cross-border dimension and cooperation between stakeholders in different regions in the world.

These principles are at the very core of the creation of an **Inter-Regional Coalition to End FGM**, among existing regional networks working towards ending the practice. Our Coalition aims to enable better coordination among civil society working towards the abandonment of FGM at different regional and sub-regional levels, and increase collaboration and information sharing to help keep momentum and accelerate change to end FGM worldwide through improved cooperation across regions.

One of the main priorities of our collective work is to ensure that in every region, **decision and policy-makers at the highest levels are strongly committed and take concrete actions** to successfully eradicate FGM. This represents another key point highlighted by the Secretary General in his report (para 32) which is reflected in the strong commitment to action taken at political level within the following UNGA resolution.

“Galvanizing political action to accelerate the elimination of FGM is one of the key issues we are addressing in the African region. This was also the core message of the International Conference co-organised by UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme and the African Union in Burkina Faso last month. And this is also why we appointed the First Lady of Burkina Faso, Madame Sika Bella Kaboré, as our Goodwill Ambassador” stated Dr. Morissanda Kouyaté, Executive Director of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices.

Our organizations also welcome the focus in the Secretary General’s report around the need to **engage with migrant communities** to influence practices both in countries of residence and in countries of origin (para. 89). Members of diaspora communities may affect FGM abandonment in their homeland, due to the strong international cultural, economic, political and affective linkages that exist between members of refugee and migrant communities and communities in their countries of origin.

“Given the global reach of FGM, including in the US, as well as the demonstrated ability of diaspora communities to influence change both in their new homes and in their homeland, it is crucial to both amplify our efforts to educate communities about the harmful effects of FGM, and harness the substantial learning potential across regions in order to end this practice”, declared Ghada Khan, Coordinator of the End FGM/C US Network.

Finally, as underscored by the aforementioned report, the work to globally put an end to FGM needs urgently to start tackling **countries and regions not traditionally associated with the practice** (para 76) and in particular communities that have not yet been targeted by national, regional and international efforts (para 83).

This is also one of the main aims of our Inter-Regional Coalition, to share lessons learned and promising practices from regions where FGM has been on the agenda for decades to those where FGM is not yet a topic on the radar of organisations and decision-makers.

“It is important that the practice of FGM is exposed in South East Asia, especially in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines, and to discuss ways to end such harmful practice. IPPF-ESEAR will start the process within its Member-Associations and will join other CSOs and Coalitions advocating to end FGM”, concluded Nora Murat, Regional Director, International Planned Parenthood Federation East and South East Asia Regional Office.

With only 12 years ahead of us before 2030, there is much to be achieved. Time is of the essence, and building on this important report and resolution, we take the opportunity to reiterate our following **key recommendations:**

- I.** Policy and decision makers at local, national, regional and international levels need to ensure commitment and leadership to effectively end FGM;
- II.** Resources need to be:
 - a.** significantly scaled up to reach the most hard-to-reach populations and truly leave no one behind
 - b.** made flexible to allow for cross-border projects promoting the abandonment of FGM and the protection and care for women and girls affected as a key element to accelerate change
 - c.** made accessible to community-based organisations and community-led projects to enable them to be crucial agents of change towards ending FGM;
- III.** The next generation of young activists and youth initiatives need to be put at the very heart of the global movement to end FGM, to ensure greater impact and sustainability of change in the long-term;
- IV.** A survivor-centred approach must be at the core of all work around FGM, and FGM must always be addressed in a sensitive, non-trivialising and non-stigmatizing manner.

The time is now to come all together and scale up efforts to end this practice by 2030, leaving no woman or girl behind.

Signed

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