

**UN Human Rights Council 33rd Session – 26 September 2016**  
**Oral Statement on Annual Discussion on the Integration of a Gender Perspective**

*Check against Delivery*

Thank you Mr. President.

This statement is delivered by Plan International, in collaboration with Defence for Children International and Terre des Hommes International Federation, who are working together<sup>1</sup> to affect policy change at the local, national and international level to strengthen gender equality and women and girls' rights.

We welcome today's panel as well as the work carried out by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to provide guidance to member States on integrating a gender perspective, and encourage all States to make use of these valuable materials.

Progress has been made over the last decades on recognizing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls. That progress, however, has been slow within the Human Rights Council, where, according to the OHCHR, only 4% of the over 400 thematic resolutions have an explicit reference to women's rights and gender. Those few that do reference the specific needs of women and girls rarely or never spell out what those needs actually are. The vast majority of resolutions are completely gender blind — an approach that reinforces existing gender inequalities and stereotypes.

Therefore, not only must this Council take steps to more systematically integrate gender into its resolutions, but it must go beyond simply mentioning women and girls in passing or as an add-on. The root causes of inequalities must be acknowledged, unpacked, and analysed in order to be properly addressed. The resolutions of this Council should consistently emphasize the impact of social structures and unequal power relations on gender inequality, and actively seek to promote change at societal level. They must also move beyond equating "women and girls" with "vulnerability", as they so often do, and rather focus on the empowerment of women and girls and their potential to contribute to the creation of more just, peaceful and equitable societies.

Too often, the phrase "women and girls" is used throughout resolutions, grouping the two together into one category and virtually ignoring the specific structural barriers each group faces in accessing their rights. By including both an age and a gender perspective, the Council will be able to ensure that its resolutions and recommendations truly leave no one behind.

In sum, we recommend the Council to:

1. Ensure that a gender perspective goes beyond simply mentioning women and girls, and seeks to effectively address root causes of discrimination.
2. Emphasize the empowerment and potential of girls and women to contribute to the creation of more just, peaceful and equitable societies in all of its work.
3. Include an age disaggregation, acknowledging the specific needs of different demographics.
4. Address all forms of patriarchal and unjust social systems that enforce gender roles which are oppressive to both boys and girls, men and women.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Plan International, Defence for Children International, ECPAT International, and Terre des Hommes International are implementing partners in the Girls Advocacy Alliance, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.