



**UN Human Rights Council 38rd Session – 21 June 2018**  
**Oral Statement on Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women**  
**Panel 1:**

**The Impact of violence against women human rights defenders and women's organizations  
in digital spaces**

*Check against Delivery*

Thank you, Mr. President,

This statement is delivered by Plan International together with Terre des Hommes International Federation, Defence for Children International, ECPAT International and Global March Against Child Labour, who are working together in the Girls Advocacy Alliance to effect policy change to eradicate violence against girls and fight their economic exclusion.

Technology has the potential be a powerful tool for empowering girls and women and supporting adolescent girls and young women human rights defenders to exercise their rights and advocate for change. Online spaces and digital tools allow women and girls to organize more efficiently and enjoy their right to equal participation in political and public affairs.

However, when misused, digital technologies can also replicate and sometimes amplify violence experienced offline. Indeed, violence committed against girls and women in digital spaces cannot be separated from violence committed offline; it stems from same root causes of gender inequality and patriarchal structures and must be addressed as part of broader efforts to eliminate gender-based violence as well as all forms of gender inequality and discrimination.

Adolescent girls and young women human rights defenders may face particular risks online. This age cohort significantly more connected than their older counterparts, and therefore much more likely to be making use of digital technologies to do activism. They therefore face the double burden of age- and gender-based discrimination, compounded by risks taken by their activist activities. Finally, adolescent girls, especially in the youngest cohort, often lack adequate information to protect themselves from risks faced online.

We therefore call on Member States to:

- Ensure a preventive approach, by facilitating training and campaigns at community level to promote social and behavioural change and integrating into national school curricula trainings on online safety.
- Ensure that solutions do not serve to further impede young women and girls from accessing digital technologies or reinforce gender-based discrimination and inequality, but rather address the root causes of violence in digital spaces.
- Develop and enforce laws and policies to prevent online violence against young women and girls and ensure law enforcement mechanisms to bring perpetrators to justice.
- Consult regularly with children and young people, especially adolescent girls, in the design and implementation of protection and empowerment policies.

Thank you, Mr. President.