

**UN Human Rights Council 42<sup>nd</sup> Session – 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019**  
**Oral Statement on Annual Discussion: Integration of a gender perspective throughout**  
**the work of the Human Rights Council and that of its mechanisms**

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 in the Girls Advocacy Alliance, an initiative striving for a world in which all girls and young women enjoy equal rights and opportunities.

We welcome this annual panel on the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the Human Rights Council, as it is an important opportunity not only to take stock of important developments in this regard but also analyse remaining challenges in ensuring more balanced representation in decision-making processes.

In this regard, a significant challenge remains in integrating an age perspective in the work of the Council, including ensuring the participation of girls and young women in decision-making. Girls and young face heightened challenges due to their age and gender, and are too often told that their voices don't count as much as their male peers. Mellicentia, an inspiring young 17-year-old activist from Sierra Leone who spoke during the Day of General Discussion (DGD) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in September 2018 put it this way: "...girls have the right to speak up, girls have the right to do what boys do. You just have to give her the chance." Further care must be taken to include girls and women from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities.

The Human Rights Council and its mechanisms have limited space for the meaningful participation of girls and young women.

In this regard, we urge Members States to:

- Implement the Human Rights Council resolution 41/6 on "Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls", which included the first-ever reference in a HRC Resolution to girl human rights defenders, as well as actively support and cooperate with UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls;
- Facilitate the participation of young women in UN mechanisms, including in HRC delegations and in human rights monitoring reviews;
- Promote an enabling environment to develop children's and young people's skills for leadership, including through quality human rights education;
- Prevent and respond to risks of reprisals against young women and girls' human rights defenders in retaliation for their engagement with international and regional human rights systems.

Our question to the panellist would be what, in your opinion, could be done to enable the meaningful participation of girls and young women in accountability mechanisms despite the various barriers they face?

I thank you.