

HRC39: General Debate Item 8
24 September 2018

Joint statement on behalf of 223 civil society organisations¹

¹ This statement is joined by the following organisations and groups: Aahung; A.L.E.G.; Accion Respeto- Costa Rica; Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights; Adas; Acompañamiento despues de un aborto seguro; ADESPROC LIBERTAD; Afrikagrupperna; Akahata A.C.; Albanian Center for Population and Development; ALDHEA; Aliansi Satu Visi (One Vision Alliance); Alianza por la Solidaridad; Alliance for Choice; Amnesty International; ASAFOCAIS; Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; Asia Safe Abortion Partnership; Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW); Asociacion Amar C; Asociacion Ciudadana ACCEDER; Asociacion Civil de Mujeres " Foro de Mujeres por la Igualdad de Oportunidades" SALTA; Asociacion Civil Mujeres en Línea; Asociacion de Jovenes Metamorfosis; Asociacion Equidad LGBTI; Asociacion juplas; Asociacion Para Una Vida Mejor de Personas Infectadas /Afectadas por el VIH-Sida en Honduras (APUVIMEH); Asociacion Solidaria de Cooperantes Universitarios Andaluza-ASCUA; Asociacion; Venezolana para una Educacion Sexual Alternativa (AVESA); Associação Brasileira Interdisciplinar de AIDS; Association for Prevention of Septic Abortion Bangladesh; Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID); Association HERA XXI; Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON); Associazione Italiana Donne per lo Sviluppo (AIDOS); ASTRA Network; ASTRA Youth; AWARE GIRLS; B.a.B.e.; Berlinski Kongres Kobiet; Beyond Beijing Committee; Blue Veins; Pakistan; Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA); CADIRE CAMEROON ASSOCIATION; Campana 28 de septiembre Bolivia; Campana Nacional por el Aborto Libre, Seguro y Accesible Puerto Rico; Capacitacion y Derechos Ciudadanos; Catolicas pelo Direito de Decidir; Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE); Center for Information and Counseling on Reproductive Health – Tanadgoma; Center for Inquiry; Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR); Center for Women's Global Leadership; Centre for Law & Policy Research India; Centre for Solutions Journalism; Centre Women and Modern World; Centro de Promocion en Salud y Asistencia Familiar/CEPROSAF; Centro de Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos; CESI - Center for Education, Counselling and Research; CHANGE; CHOICE; CIES Salud Sexual Reproductiva; CLADEM Bolivia; Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR); Coalition for the Prevention of Unsafe Abortion; Coalition of African Lesbians; Colectivo Rebeldia; Colombia Diversa; Comité de America Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de las Mujeres – CLADEM; Conectas Direitos Humanos; Conexion; Consorcio Boliviano de Juventudes; Consorcio Latinoamericano Contra el Aborto Inseguro – CLACAI; Coordinadora de la Mujer -BOLIVIA; Corporacion para la Construccion de Estrategias en Pro del Desarrollo Humano, Social, Comunitario y Cultural CONPÁ• ZES; CREA; Democracy is OK D.OK; Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN); Diakonia; Dziewuchy Berlin; Equipo de Comunicacion Alternativa con Mujeres; Family Planning Association of Pakistan; Federacion de Planificacion Familiar estatal; Federation for Women and Family Planning; Femini Berlin Polska; FemPlatz, Pancevo, Serbia; Fokus Muda, Indonesia; FOMUIPIO; Forum for Women and Development – FOKUS; FOS ngo; Foundation for Studies and Research on Women; Fundacion Arcoiris; Fundacion baker tglb; FUNDACION DE MUJERES LUNA CRECIENTE; FUNDACION DESAFIO; Fundacion Igualdad Lgbt; Fundacion Orientame; Fundacion para Estudio Investigacion de la Mujer; FUSA AC; GAYANUSANTARA Foundation; Gender Alternatives Foundation; Gender Education, Research and Technologies foundation; Global Doctors for Choice; Global Justice Center; Glown; Haldimand Norfolk Pro-Choice Coalition; HERA - Health Education and Research Association; Hivos; Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries; ICRHM (Centro Internacional para Saude Reproductiva - Mosambique); IGUAL; IM Swedish Development Partner; Independent Youth Forum Papua, Indonesia; Initiative of Piaseczno's Women; International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion; International Federation for Human Rights Leagues; International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU); International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF); International Women's Health Coalition; Ipas; Ipas Mexico; Italian Association for Women in Development (AIDOS); JASS -Just Associates; Journalists for Human Rights; Just.CHOICE; Karat Coalition; Kongres Kobiet; Województwa Śląskiego; L' Asociacion. Droits Sexuels i Reproductius; Latin American and the Caribbean Health Women Network- LACHWN; Le Mouvement FranCais pour le Planning Familial; Manifest Wolnej Polki; Marie Stopes International; Marie Stopes Nepal; Movimiento SOMOS, Venezuela; MPact Global Action for Gay Men's Health & Rights; Neges Kreyol; Nicobis; Nyale Institute for Sexual and Reproductive Health Governance; Observatorio de Genero y Equidad; Patent Association; Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia (PKBI); Perkumpulan Pamflet Generasi; PILIPINA Legal Resources Center, Inc.; PKBI (Indonesian Planned Parenthood Association); Plan International; Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Plataforma Derechos Aqui- y Ahora Bolivia; Polish Women's Strike; Population Foundation of India; Pro Femina Association, Poland; Programa Genero y Sexualidades, Facultad de Derecho; PROMSEX; Puska, Indoesnia; Rahnuma - Family Planning Association of Pakistan (ECOSOC organisation); Rainbow Community Kapuchea (RoCK); Red de mujeres contra la violencia; Red de Mujeres Trabajadoras Sexuales LAC; Red de Salud de las Mujeres Latinoamericanas y del Caribe – RSMILAC; Red Latinoamericana y Caribena de Jovenes por los Derechos Sexuales; Red Nacional de Lideres Juveniles "Tu Decides"; Reseau International des Droits Humains (RIDH); Reseau SOS Femmes en Detresse - SOS FED; RESURJ - Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice; RFSL - Riksförbundet för homosexuella, bisexuella, transpersoner och queeras rättigheter; Rural women's association; Rural-Urban Women And Children Development Agency (RRUWACDA); Rutgers; SafeHands for Mothers; SALUD INTEGRAL PARA LA MUJER A.C. SIPAM; Sarajevski otvoreni centar (Sarajevo Open Centre);SASOD Women's Arm Guyana (SWAG); Sex og Politikk (IPPF Norway); Sexual and Reproductive Justice Coalition; Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI); Sexuality Policy Watch; SHINE SA; Social Charitable Center Women and Modern World; Societatea de Planificare a Familiei din Moldova (SPFM)/Family Planning Association of Moldova; Society for Feminist Analyses AnA, Romania;

Mr. President,

Through the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, States explicitly agreed to prioritize the realization of all women's human rights. From Ireland, to Argentina, to South Korea, to Poland and to the Democratic Republic of Congo, women human rights defenders around the world are taking to the streets, to the courtrooms and to the ballot boxes to reclaim control over their own bodies and lives by demanding access to comprehensive abortion care. We unite in solidarity to recognize the shared roots of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination in our struggles.

Although sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) have been broadly recognized under international law, women human rights defenders (WHRDs) working on these rights often face harassment, discrimination, stigma, criminalization and physical violence.² As highlighted by UNGA resolution 68/181, the first ever resolution focusing on WHRDs, such abuses are violations of a person's fundamental rights to life, liberty, psychological and physical integrity, privacy, freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Human rights violations perpetrated against abortion rights defenders and providers are part of a broader framework of backlash against sexual and reproductive rights aimed at instrumentalizing women's bodies and lives³. Through restrictive and/or discriminatory laws and policies, some states fail to prevent or actively perpetuate these violations. In doing so, they institutionalize abortion stigma and create a hostile environment for abortion providers to carry out their work. Many persist, but others are harassed, or threatened until they cease providing such care. This forces persons – including girls – with unwanted pregnancies to risk their lives, health and well-being by turning to unsafe abortion. It is the State's obligation to repeal or eliminate laws, policies and practices that criminalize, obstruct or undermine individual's or group's access to sexual and reproductive health facilities, services, goods and information, including restrictive abortion laws.

States can no longer ignore the scientific evidence, the jurisprudence and the growing consensus among human rights bodies that abortion rights are human rights. The criminalization of abortion and the failure to ensure access to comprehensive abortion care has been found to be a violation of, inter alia, the rights to health, to bodily autonomy, freedom from discrimination, to the benefits of scientific progress, to privacy and to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment amongst other human rights. In addition, impunity for attacks on abortion rights defenders, including abortion providers, is a clear violation of the principles set forth in the Declaration of Human Rights Defenders.

Sosial Charitable Center Women and Modern World; Stichting Simavi; Stowarzyszenie Kongres Kobiet; Sukaar Welfare Organization; SWARA: Swedish Association for Sexuality Education; Swedish Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights – RFSL; SWOR- Stowarzyszenie Wszechnicy OÅ>wieczniowo- Racjonalistycznej; Synergia - Iniciativas en Derechos Humanos; Taller Salud; The Center for Inquiry; the Foundation for Studies and Research on Women; The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH); The Legal Center for Women's Initiatives "Sana Sezim"; The Swedish Abortion Rights Network (RFSU); The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU); The YP Foundation; Trust For Indigenous Culture and health; Union Women Center; Unite for Bodily Rights (UBR) Alliance Bangladesh; Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights; Väestöliitto –The Family Federation of Finland; Visible Impact; WILPF; Women Deliver; Women for Women's Human Rights - New Ways; Women's Link Worldwide; Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR); Women's Rights Center, Armenia; Women's Global Network Network for Reproductive Rights; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Women's March Global; Women's Resource Center Armenia; Yayasan Aliansi Remaja Independen; Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP), Indonesia; Yifos, Indonesia; YouAct - European Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights; Youth Advocacy Network (YAN); Youth Advocacy Network Sri Lanka; Youth Coalition ; YUWA, Nepal; YUWALAYA, Nepal; International Service for Human Rights

² See https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/SexualHealth/INFO_WHRD_WEB.pdf

³ See A/HRC/32/44

Therefore, today, on September 28, Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion, we stand together as abortion rights defenders, allies and supporters from around the world and call on the Council to condemn attacks on abortion rights defenders and to urgently address the human rights violations arising from the denial of comprehensive abortion care through its resolutions, decisions, dialogues, reviews and debates. Further, we demand that governments across the world respect, protect and fulfill the right of WHRDs working to ensure comprehensive abortion care and post-abortion care to do their work free from all forms of intimidation, harassment and violence from both State and non-State actors.

Thank you, Mr. President.