**47th session of the Human Rights Council**

**High-level panel discussion on the multisectoral prevention of and response to   
female genital mutilation**

*Concept note (as of 23 June 2021)*

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| **Date and venue:** | **Wednesday, 23 June 2021 , 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.  Room XVIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva, and online platform (Zoom)** *(will be broadcasted live and archived on* [*http://webtv.un.org*](http://webtv.un.org)*)* |
| **Objectives:** | The high-level panel provides a platform to highlight commitments, including at the global level, to advocate, influence, mobilize, build and sustain support in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic for human rights-based and gender responsive multisectoral coordination, planning, financial and monitoring arrangements and actions to end the practice of female genital mutilation. |
| **Chair:** | H.E. Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan, President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening statements:** | **Ms. Michelle Bachelet**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights *(video message)*  **H.E. Ms. Helène Marie Laurence Ilboudo**, Minister for Women, National Solidarity, Family and Humanitarian Action of Burkina Faso, on behalf of **H.E. Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré**,  President of Faso *(live intervention)* |
| **Moderator:** | **Ms. Anna Widegren**, Director of End FGM European Network |
| **Panellists:** | * **Dr. Natalia Kanem**,Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)  *(video message)* and **Ms. Monica Ferro**, Director of the UNFPA Geneva Office *(concluding remarks)* * **H.E. Ms.** **Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil**,Commissioner for Social Affairs of the African Union Commission *(video message)* * **Mr. Bahrul Fuad**, Commissioner at the National Commission on Violence against Women(Komnas Perempuan) of Indonesia *(video message)* |
| **Outcome:** | A summary report on the discussion will be prepared by OHCHR. |
| **Mandate:** | In its resolution 44/16, the Human Rights Council decided to convene a high-level panel discussion on the multisectoral prevention of and response, including the global response, to female genital mutilation. |
| **Format:** | The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. After opening statements and initial presentations by the panellists, there will be two segments of interventions, followed by conclusions from the panellists. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, which will cover the opening statement, panellists’ presentations, and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor, with each segment consisting of interventions from 12 States or observers, 1 national human rights institution and 2 non-governmental organizations. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions.  The list of speakers for the discussion will be established through the online inscription system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet. |
| **Background:** | For more than two decades, the global consensus has been that the elimination of female genital mutilation (FGM) contributes to achieving gender equality. A recent report suggests that female genital mutilation may be present in more than 90 countries globally, illustrating its presence in communities across all continents and highlighting the global nature of this harmful practice. Recognizing this harmful impact on the rights and lives of women and girls, the Human Rights Council, in its latest resolution on the subject, encouraged all States to engage in consultations with all other stakeholders, with a view to prioritizing the issue of FGM, in order to increase mobilization and cooperation on this global problem.  Efforts are being made to address the phenomenon by Governments, development and community actors, media, civil society organizations. They are partly in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly under Goal 5.3, which includes commitments to greater accountability to girls and women at the global, regional and national levels.  Also, actions to prevent and eliminate the practice have led to increased visibility, including through the adoption of resolutions by the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the African Union and the European Parliament, as well as regional campaigns aimed at galvanizing different actors. At the national level, efforts to promote a comprehensive and multisectoral approach to the prevention of FGM have yielded some decisive achievements. For instance, 78 per cent of countries with available data prohibit or criminalize FGM; the majority, 87 per cent, have a national coordination structure and some replicate this good practice at the local level (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Cameroon and Nigeria).  However, these findings do not overshadow the many challenges that remain in eliminating the practice and protecting at-risk groups. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 200 million girls and women had undergone FGM and at least four million girls were at risk each year. Unless the prevention and elimination of FGM is prioritized and integrated in COVID-19 national response plans and humanitarian actions generally, many more girls will be at a higher risk of FGM by 2030. Countries reporting FGM are also affected by increasing complex humanitarian crises, in addition to COVID-19, which has caused a setback in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.  As we continue pushing for the Decade of Action and the implementation of the Secretary-General’s Call to Action on Human Rights, transformative actions are needed to strengthen commitments. Some important accelerators include the national commitments made by governments and other stakeholders at the Nairobi Summit on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+25), the Ouagadougou Call to Action on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation and the Cairo call to action for the elimination of child marriage and female genital mutilation in Africa. At the national level, all actors are called upon to adopt a multisectoral and comprehensive approach to ending this practice. This means expanding partnerships at the local, sub-national and national levels while building response across sectors such as health, education, social, economic sphere and justice, and in the public and private sectors. It also involves funding responses and mobilizing public and private investments to support anti-FGM programmes, as well as working on policies and laws. In addition, it involves empowering girls and women with services, information and education, including better access to essential services (health care, social services and justice); supporting the communities and family members in changing such harmful social and gender norms, and finally strengthening collaboration with the national protection system to implement laws and policies that prevent FGM.  Collaboration among various actors will serve as a “force multiplier” that holds governments accountable for eliminating FGM. In this regard, accountability bodies can also play a critical role, particularly national human rights institutions, the African Union Saleema Initiative accountability framework at the regional level, and human rights mechanisms including the universal periodic review at the global level. |
| **Background documents:** | * [Human Rights Council resolution 6/30](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/6/30) of 14 December 2007 on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system * [Human Rights Council resolution 44/16](https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/44/16) of 17 July 2020 on elimination of female genital mutilation * Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the expert group meeting on the elimination of female genital mutilation ([A/HRC/44/33](https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/44/33), April 2020) * [Joint general recommendation](https://undocs.org/CEDAW/C/GC/31/CRC/C/GC/18) No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices (2014) |