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WOMEN AND GIRLS: CATALYSING ACTION TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY

HIGH-LEVEL LEADERS' ROUNDTABLE

Core Responsibilities Two and Three of the Agenda for Humanity

“Women and girls’ full and equal participation [...] at all levels must become the standard.”

Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit

BACKGROUND

The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit will take place from 23 to 24 May 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey. Three years of extensive consultations reaching more than 23,000 people in 153 countries clearly called for change in how the international community addresses humanitarian need and suffering and called for a renewed commitment to humanity. Istanbul is the moment to demonstrate global unity and solidarity to prevent and end suffering, and to take all steps necessary to make humanity the driver of decision-making and collective action.

In his report for the World Humanitarian Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General calls upon Member States and other stakeholders to accept and act upon five core responsibilities that he believes are critical to delivering better for humanity. His Agenda for Humanity outlines the key actions and strategic shifts necessary to deliver on these responsibilities. The Secretary-General urges global leaders at the Summit to commit to taking the Agenda forward.



This should be a framework for action, change and mutual accountability to measure progress over the next three years and beyond.

The High-Level Leaders' Roundtable on "Women and Girls: Catalysing Action to Achieve Gender Equality" addresses Core Responsibilities Two and Three of the Agenda for Humanity. Core Responsibility Two calls on us to "uphold the norms that safeguard humanity, including eradicating sexual and gender-based violence and treat survivors with dignity" while Core Responsibility Three reminds us to "leave no one behind, including through empowering and protecting women and girls."

CONTEXT

Disasters kill more women than men. Countries suffering from conflict and disasters have the highest rates of maternal morbidity and mortality. All forms of gender-based violence against women and girls spike during conflict. Gender inequality prevents women and girls from leading safe, healthy, and dignified lives, and from reaching their full potential. Although gender inequality exists in all settings, when this prevailing form of discrimination occurs during crises that women and girls suffer the most. This includes extreme levels of gender-based violence and exclusion from life-saving services and decision making that affects their lives. Yet humanitarian action continues to fail women and girls and leave them behind.

As of 2015, just 0.5 per cent of humanitarian funding was spent on addressing gender-based violence. Only 43 per cent of women in emergencies have access to reproductive health services despite the fact that 60 per cent of the women who die in pregnancy and childbirth are in crisis zones. Just 1 per cent of all funding to fragile states in 2015 went to women's groups or governments' ministries of women. The capacity and knowledge of local women's groups are not being fully utilized despite evidence that shows this is one of the most effective ways to increase the impact of humanitarian response. Ensuring women's rights and empowerment has also been shown to accelerate the transition from humanitarian action to recovery, and build resilience thereby reducing the likelihood of recurrence of humanitarian crises.

We must collectively take much bolder steps to enable women and girls realize their human rights and to end discrimination in crises.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the High-Level Leaders' Roundtable "Women and Girls: Catalyzing Action to Achieve Gender Equality" is to have leaders demonstrate decisive leadership and assume responsibility for meeting the needs of women and girls in crisis settings. After decades of insufficient action, we must use the Summit to focus world attention on the unacceptable exclusion of women and girls in decision-making in many crisis settings, and the devastating impact of war, displacement, and disasters on their lives and livelihoods.

In line with the Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity, the roundtable will seek concrete policy, operational and financial commitments from leaders addressing the following questions:

- *How can we achieve system-wide accountability for gender equality and women and girl's empowerment in crisis settings including through scaled-up funding for women's groups?*
- *How can we significantly increase access to quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care, thereby reducing maternal mortality in humanitarian contexts?*



- *What bold steps are required to eradicate gender-based violence and ensure universal quality support for survivors?*

The commitments should aim to ensure that women and girls' leadership, rights, protection, and needs are centrally addressed in humanitarian programming; that women's groups are better funded and supported; and that women and adolescent girls have access to quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care. High-level commitments should also be made to support the implementation of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence and its corresponding roadmap. Specific targets for achieving gender equality, empowering women and women's groups, reducing maternal mortality and eradicating sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian contexts will be defined before the Summit and will provide a framework for measuring progress. The commitments announced at the roundtable should build upon the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Sustainable Development Goals, and Security Council Resolution 2242 on Women, Peace and Security.

FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

The High-Level Leaders' Roundtable will be convened and moderated by a Chair and supported by a Rapporteur. The roundtable will result in a Roundtable Summary which will include the individual and collective commitments made by participants and a way forward. The Roundtable Summary will contribute to the Chair's Summary of the World Humanitarian Summit.

This High-Level Leaders' Roundtable will last for two hours, with interventions from between 35 and 50 global leaders. Each leader may be accompanied by two advisors. Leaders will speak from assigned seats (roundtable format) and their interventions should not exceed three minutes. The roundtable will be open to media and be broadcast and webcast live. The time and location for this session will be made known shortly.

REGISTRATION AND ROUNDTABLE PREPARATIONS

The objective of this roundtable will be for Member States and other stakeholders to announce commitments to make tangible progress against the recommendations under Core Responsibilities Two and Three for Agenda for Humanity. Please register your interest in the roundtable and the level of participation you envisage for this event at leadersroundtables@whsummit.org by March 11, 2016.

The WHS secretariat will contact interested Member States and other stakeholders over the next two months to work together to prepare each High-Level Leaders' Roundtable, including by identifying and securing concrete commitments aimed at making progress against each of the five Core Responsibilities of the Agenda for Humanity. This interaction will build upon and expand existing partnerships with Member States and stakeholders.