

Statements Maldives joined

CEFM Statement on Item 3

JOINT STATEMENT ON CHILD EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE

AGENDA ITEM 3 GENERAL DEBATE

27TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

15 September 2014

Mr. Vice-President,

On behalf of the core group comprising of Argentina, Canada, Ethiopia, Honduras, Italy, Maldives, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Zambia, and 103 co-signatories – the complete list of which will be available on the HRC Extranet, I have the honour to present this joint statement on “Strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate Child, Early and Forced Marriage”.

Recognizing that this practice is a gross violation of human rights which requires the serious consideration by the Council, the Core Group tabled a Resolution during the twenty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council. The resolution (HRC 24/23) was adopted unanimously by Member States. This reflects the Council’s profound commitment to protecting the rights of victims of this practice and to combat and prevent it.

The resolution called for a first ever OHCHR report on the child, early and forced marriage to inform a panel discussion on the achievements, best practices implementation gaps and challenges faced in efforts to eliminate the practice, at the 26th Session of the Human Rights Council. A summary report on the panel discussion was prepared by OHCHR and highlights, inter alia, the negative and impact this widespread harmful practice has on the affected persons, including girls, boys, men and women.

The findings and conclusions of this report and the panel discussion are clear. They underscore the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of victims, including the right to education, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health. In addition, the underlying causes of CEFM which hinder the health and well-being of all victims, as well as their capacity to play an active role in the economic, social and political life and development of their communities were clearly highlighted. The OHCHR Report emphasized the undeniable connection between girls’ education and their empowerment.

Furthermore, it was observed that by addressing the root causes, it is possible to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, gender inequality and the economic disempowerment of

women and girls. This goal cannot be achieved without coordination among government bodies, civil society organizations, UN agencies, and development partners to combat the practice, as part of poverty alleviation and economic development planning.

Finally, while the role played by governments and lawmakers was acknowledged, the participation of all traditional and religious leaders, as well as men and boys in eradicating CEFM, while also taking into account the specific cultural settings of the affected countries, was deemed to be equally important. They have an important role to play in changing these harmful social practices in their own communities, and in ensuring that the girls already in such marriages receive adequate access to healthcare, education, and other basic services.

Building on the outcomes of the OHCHR Report and the Panel, we would like to pursue this subject with the vigour and intensity it deserves. We recognize that this issue is being discussed in New York, in relation to the Post-2015 Development Agenda and appreciate that eliminating CEFM is included in a specific target in the outcome document of the Open-Ended Working Group. We believe that the results of our deliberations at the Human Rights Council would enrich the ongoing discussion, from a human rights perspective.

The Core Group intends to pool all the various inputs together for a substantive resolution at the 29th Session of the Human Rights Council, to further strengthen the work which has already started and will demonstrate the unwavering commitment to eradicating the practice of child early and forced marriage, and to keep it on the agenda of the Council.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

Co-sponsored by 103 additional delegations:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sudan, Swaziland, Switzerland, Sweden, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, UK, Ukraine, Uruguay, US, Zambia, Zimbabwe