

2020 ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment

High-Level Side-Event (9 June 2020, 1pm-2:30pm), Virtual

“Combating and preventing sexual gender-based violence in humanitarian crises”

PROVISIONAL CONCEPT NOTE

Background and theme

This is a high-level side-event to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in line with the overall theme of the ECOSOC HAS this year, “Reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations: taking action for people-centred solutions, strengthening effectiveness, respecting international humanitarian law and promoting the humanitarian principles”.

The High Level Side Event “**Combating and preventing sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises**” coincides with the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) and the 20th anniversary of the Security Council Resolution 1325 on women peace and security. It is also taking place against the backdrop of COVID19, exposing existing gender inequalities and their consequences on women and girls, and society as a whole. The global health pandemic has forced all countries to confront the structural inequalities that disadvantage women and girls – in peace, and conflict settings.

Internally displaced and refugee women and girls are one of the most underserved and underfunded affected population groups in humanitarian crises. While we know this work is critical, it is estimated that only 0.12% of humanitarian funding went to gender based violence (GBV) programs from 2016-2018. This shortfall is stark when we know that pre-existing gender inequality can further hamper women and girls access to life saving services including health, water, food, protection, as well as education, and livelihoods. In particular, exposure to gender based violence such as sexual violence, intimate partner violence, early and forced marriage, are further exacerbated. This is well illustrated by the current COVID19 pandemic, in which quarantine measures and movement restrictions have trapped survivors with their abusers, including in humanitarian settings with reduced access to support services.

In addition, violations of international humanitarian law by armed actors put women and girls as well as men and boys at risk of sexual violence and other forms of gender based violence.

Prioritising women and girls and their access to life saving assistance, protection, rights, and decision-making processes, are critical to the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This is key to the ‘Call to Action on Protection from Gender Based Violence in Emergencies’ and the ECOSOC HAS.

Objectives

This high-level side-event will highlight the disproportionate impact of emergencies on women and girls and reinforce the importance of prioritising their experiences, protection, capacities and leadership, in particular their experiences of gender based violence including sexual violence.

The high level event will also call for strengthened collective action by member states and humanitarians to increase funding, dedicated resources, and services, and strengthen implementation of legislation, policies and programs that mitigate, respond to and prevent gender based violence in humanitarian settings.

The event will bring together key stakeholders including member states, diplomats, humanitarians, civil society, and survivors to engage in dialogue about key issues and experiences, and promising practices to address gender based violence.

Chair

- H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco and Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council

Moderator

Mark Lowcock, Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Speaker

Other Panel speakers

- Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway
- Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi, Acclaimed Writer, Nigeria
- Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, UNFPA
- Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF
- Kelly Clements, Deputy High Commissioner, UNHCR
- Elinor Raikes, Vice President and Head of Program Delivery, International Rescue Committee
- Christine Seisun, Sexual Violence Operations Manager, International Committee of the Red Cross, Sudan
- Fatima Shehu Imam, Network of Civil Society Organisations in Borno State, Nigeria

Indicative guiding questions

- How can member states and humanitarian organisations further support the mitigation, response and prevention of GBV?
- We know that transforming norms and systems that perpetuate gender inequality can have a tangible impact on women's and girls' health, safety and security. What more must be done to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian settings?
- What promising practices on women's leadership and engagement in decision making in humanitarian settings must be promoted/replicated?
- What are the dimensions of the impacts and underlying structural issues that have been revealed through the scale of the COVID impact/implications? what needs to be done to respond? In the face of dire consequences, could this also present a pivotal moment to push for more transformative solutions?

Contact

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