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Statement submitted by Equality Now, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Equality Now, an international human rights organization, calls on all member states at the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure that girls are empowered and allowed to grow up to become empowered women with all their rights promoted and protected by law, to prevent violence and to combat all forms of discrimination on the basis of sex.

UN-Women in its report, *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*, and The World Bank in its report, *Women, Business and the Law 2016: Getting to Equal*, have shown clearly that without good laws and access to justice, women and girls have no formal recourse for violations of their rights and cannot fully participate in society. This hurts them, their families and societies and hinders sustainable development. Unfortunately, as evidenced by our work with lawyers and organizations around the world, all too often discrimination and violence against women and girls continues to prevent women and girls from accessing justice. Legal equality, on the other hand, gives women and girls an equal opportunity to build up their capabilities and is an essential component to meeting the agreed upon sustainable development goals in *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* ("Agenda 2030") adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015.

We heartily welcome the endorsement by member states of Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in Agenda 2030, and strong targets, including target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls ... and target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, which human rights, women's rights and development organizations like ours have advocated for over the last three years. We also welcome member states' call for the elimination of discriminatory laws, contained in Goal 10's target 10.3, and their commitment to the promotion of the rule of law and access to justice in Goal 16's target 16.3. However, international legal frameworks and commitments make a difference in the lives of women and girls only to the extent that they are actually implemented at the national level.

In 2016, governments will adopt indicators to measure progress towards achieving these goals and targets. Progress should be measured by discrete and universal indicators that address structural inequalities that contribute to violence against women and girls. The repeal of sex discriminatory laws is one such important structural indicator that affects virtually every part of a girl and woman's life — education, health, employment, security, citizenship, property inheritance and ownership, marriage and right to divorce. The adoption of a universal indicator on the prevalence of female genital mutilation, an extreme form of violence perpetrated against millions of women and girls around the world would be another important measure of progress towards a more equal, just world of empowered women and girls, men and boys.

We call upon member states to re-energize their efforts and uphold their commitments to the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, including by accelerating their efforts to repeal or amend all sex discriminatory laws as soon as possible. We call on them to focus on especially those laws that actually promote violence against women and girls, and to enact and enforce laws to prevent further violence. This would be one very concrete way of realizing the commitment to promoting both gender equality and the rule of law.