Joint Statement on the International Day against Female Genital Mutilation

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, Federica Mogherini, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra Jourova, and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, issued the following statement on the International Day against Female Genital Mutilation, 6 February:

Today, as well as all over the year, we join our voices to say: Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation in Europe and worldwide.

Like other harmful practices, Female Genital Mutilation locks women and girls in a value system that is both unequal and detrimental to development and harmful to society as a whole. Estimates show that there might be as many as 125 million victims worldwide and 500,000 victims in the EU alone. This practice has a profound, lifelong impact on health and wellbeing, and can even lead to death.

We are committed every day to ending Female Genital Mutilation, which is a violation of human rights and children's rights. We strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and girls: neither custom, nor tradition, nor culture, nor privacy, nor religion or so-called honour can be invoked to justify any form of violence against women and girls. Nor can it be used as an excuse by States to avoid their obligations to prevent and eliminate violence against women and prosecute perpetrators.

The EU is fighting against female genital mutilation on many fronts, as part of a global strategy to promote gender equality. The Commission supports work by NGOs at the grassroots level, at the heart of communities that practice female genital mutilation, engaging with women, girls, men, boys, and traditional and religious leaders. In addition to ongoing funding for work at EU Member State level, and on the ground, an additional €4.5 million will be made available already this year to support projects that aim to prevent and combat violence linked to harmful practices within the European Union.

We are also creating an EU web-based platform on female genital mutilation for professionals who are the first to come into contact with victims and girls at risk. We aim to reach the primary points of contact, such as nurses, judges, asylum officers, teachers, doctors, and police officers, and support them to help eradicate the practice.

Globally, the EU is urging all countries to prohibit, punish and undertake appropriate action to change the social norms underpinning female genital mutilation by putting the issues high on the agendas of EU political and human rights dialogues with relevant partner countries. The EU supports advocacy for improved national legislation on female genital mutilation, awareness raising, quality and gender equitable education, and the work of grassroots organisations.

This includes for example in Liberia support to civil society advocating for women’s access to justice and working to reduce female genital mutilation, and in Guinea-Bissau establishing a protective environment for women's rights, promoting the abandonment of female genital mutilation and providing support to victims. Other actions are also supported in a range of countries, including Mali, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Egypt, Mauritania, Djibouti, Yemen, Senegal, Benin, and Togo.

We will continue to work on better data collection, and improving our knowledge on female genital mutilation, in cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality. We will also continue engaging with the experts directly involved in the efforts to eliminate the
practice on community, national or academic level. Our aim is that no woman or girl across the globe has to undergo female genital mutilation. We welcome the recent entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which provides a valuable framework to effectively combat violence against women and girls nationally and across Europe, including female genital mutilation.

The EU remains fully committed to combatting all forms of gender-based violence both within the EU and in our external relations. We will continue our common efforts to ban female genital mutilation in the EU and beyond, and make gender equality a reality."

For more information:

Communication towards the elimination of female genital mutilation (25 November 2013):


For more information:

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