

## **Preliminary Investigation Transcription**

### **International Youth Council on Gender Equality**

#### **Overview:**

The *Preliminary Investigation Conference* of the International Youth Council on Gender Equality (IYCGE) served as a foundational convening designed to surface region-specific gender equality challenges through ambassador-led testimony, analysis, and dialogue. Bringing together youth representatives from diverse geographic, cultural, and socio-political contexts, the conference prioritized lived experience alongside emerging research to identify patterns of inequality across digital, environmental, economic, and social domains. Rather than advancing finalized policy positions, the conference functioned as an early-stage investigative forum—creating space for issue-mapping, convergence, and cross-regional listening.

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## **Transcription:**

### **Session 1: Saturday, February 7, 2026**

**Adam Alkazely (Executive Chairperson):** Today, we gather for the International Youth Council on Gender Equality Preliminary Investigation Conference, united by one purpose: to confront gender inequality not as an abstract concept, but as a lived reality shaped by region, culture, history, and voice.

At IYCGE, we reject the idea that solutions can come from a single worldview. Gender inequality does not look the same in every place—so neither should our understanding of it. Our work is rooted in regional epistemology: in the stories of communities, the wisdom of lived experience, the weight of history, and the power of cultural identity. We do not speak for regions—we listen to them.

Today, you will hear from fellow global ambassadors. Each speaker has three minutes to present gender equality issues of their choosing—their causes, their consequences, and the people whose lives are shaped by them. You may draw from personal experiences, research, statistics, or the voices of those too often unheard. This is not just a presentation; it is testimony, analysis, and, most importantly, advocacy.

When called upon, please unmute, speak clearly and confidently, and honor the space with professionalism. The chat will remain open throughout for questions, reflections, and dialogue, supported by Deputy Chairperson Guo and Assistant to the Chairperson, Atiah. After each address, I will open the floor for questions. If you wish to speak, please use the “raise hand” feature and wait to be recognized. Not all questions will be answered due to time constraints. Please note that this is a preliminary conference, where in-depth research has not yet been a priority.

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Let us remember why we are here.

At IYCGE, we choose convergence over conflict. We believe diplomacy is not weakness—it is strength guided by understanding. Every person in this space shares a common commitment: advancing sustainable development and gender equality, not in theory, but in reality, across every region of the world.

There is an old idea that the world is changed by those who stand at the center and speak. But history tells a different story. Real change often begins at the edges—in small rooms, quiet villages, crowded streets, and around kitchen tables—where someone says, “This is what my life is like,” and someone else chooses to truly hear them. These moments rarely make headlines, yet they are where understanding is born. And when enough understanding gathers, it moves—across borders, across cultures, across generations—until what once felt distant becomes shared, and what once felt impossible becomes inevitable.

That is how the world shifts. Not all at once, but voice by voice, story by story, until listening becomes action, and action becomes change.

With that, I now call upon our first speaker, who will be making their final appearance today. I welcome the representative from Canada, Ambassador Tristan Kim.

**Tristan Kim (Ambassador, Canada):** Thank you, Chairperson. I hope you can all hear me well. Good morning to my fellow ambassadors and guests, and good afternoon to those joining us from the other side of the world.

My name is Tristan Kim, and I am a second-year university student at the University of Ottawa. I bring greetings from Canada, a nation built on the pioneering spirit of equality—a spirit

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demonstrated when Manitoba became the first province in our country to grant women the right to vote in 1916, and later when the historic Persons Case of 1929 affirmed that women were indeed legal persons eligible to sit in public office.

I do not see these as merely legal milestones. Rather, they were declarations of a fundamental belief in dignity, inclusion, and equality. Yet, a century later, we stand at a crossroads. Despite this proud legacy, we confront profound and urgent gender inequalities that now threaten the very social cohesion, democratic integrity, and shared future those pioneers fought to secure.

Today, I will outline three critical and interconnected issues that our research team and national team will be addressing with urgency.

First is gendered digital violence. Our digital public realm is currently under siege. Women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ individuals face rampant cyberstalking, rape threats, and image-based abuse designed to silence them. This deprives our democracy of diverse voices and violates the Charter rights to security and equality of countless Canadians.

Second is the intersection of gender, resource insecurity, and climate disruption in Indigenous communities. Here, colonial legacy and the climate crisis collide with an overwhelming force. Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirited people face heightened violence and vulnerability, exacerbated by resource extraction projects that bring man camps and environmental degradation to their territories without true consent.

Third is gendered segregation in Canada's climate workforce. As we invest historic sums in a net-zero future, we risk baking inequality into the foundation of our new economy. Women—particularly racialized, Indigenous, and immigrant women—are being systematically

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excluded from high-growth, high-wage green jobs in trades, technology, and engineering. This is due to pipeline failures in education, hostile workplaces, and policy blind spots.

These three issues are linked by a common thread: the systemic exclusion of women and gender-diverse people from spaces of power, safety, and opportunity—whether digital, environmental, or economic.

Our national team in Canada will be recommending regulating online spaces with a duty of care, implementing the Calls for Justice from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry, and tying every dollar of green funding to mandatory, enforceable gender equity targets.

The path forward requires not just policy, but a fundamental shift in priorities—from extraction to care, from harassment to inclusion, and from empty rhetoric to accountable action.

Thank you all for your time.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Angie Gancino (Ambassador, Ecuador):** Good morning everyone. My name is Angie. I am a political scientist with a background in governance and human rights. I am going to talk first about the key gender-related issues identified in Ecuador that are deeply structural and interconnected. I would like to say that my country has adopted a progressive constitutional framework and has formally committed to gender equality through national legislation and international human rights instruments. There remains a persistent gap between legal recognition and effective implementation.

Gender inequality in Ecuador is not primarily the result of isolated failures but rather of long-standing economic, institutional, and cultural dynamics that continue to shape women's lives in unequal ways. One of the most significant gender-related issues is economic inequality. Women in

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Ecuador face persistent barriers to access to employment, including higher levels of informality, lower wages, and limited access to social protection. These challenges are closely linked to the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work. Women continue to assume the primary responsibility for caregiving, household labor, and community support, which limits their time, income-generating opportunities, and economic autonomy. As a result, economic dependence and vulnerability to power remain central features of gender inequality. Economic inequality also affects women's capacity to participate fully in public and political life. While Ecuador has implemented party and quota mechanisms to increase women's representation in political institutions, numerical inclusion has not consistently translated into substantive participation. Women, particularly those from Indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, rural, and low-income backgrounds, continue to face structural barriers such as limited access to political networks, campaign financing, and decision-making spaces.

This reveals that political participation cannot be measured solely by representation, but must also consider influence, power, and agenda-setting capacity. Another key issue relates to institutional weaknesses that undermine the protection of women's rights. Limited state capacity, weak accountability mechanisms, and insufficient coordination between public institutions reduce the effectiveness of gender equality policies. These challenges are especially pronounced in rural and marginalized territories where access to justice, social services, and protection mechanisms is often restricted. As a result, formal rights are unevenly experienced across different regions and social groups. Finally, gender inequality in Ecuador must be understood through an intersectional lens. Gender interacts with ethnicity, territory, class, and environmental factors to produce differentiated and compounded forms of exclusion. Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian women, for example, experience economic marginalization alongside racial discrimination and territorial exclusion.

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Environmental degradation and extractive activities further intensify care responsibilities and economic insecurity, linking gender inequality with environmental injustice. The key gender-related issues in Ecuador cannot be addressed through legal reforms alone.

Meaningful progress requires structural and transformative approaches that reduce economic inequality, redistribute unpaid care work, strengthen institutional capacity, and incorporate intersectional perspectives into public policy. Without such changes, gender equality risks remaining symbolic rather than substantive. Thank you so much.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Chiara Guerra (Ambassador, Italy):** Deputy Chairperson, distinguished colleagues, Sam Kagu, a legal professional specializing in public international law. I speak today as the Global Ambassador for Italy. I begin with the premise that rights that exist exclusively on paper are not rights fully realized. Italy formally recognizes gender equality, health, education, and employment. Yet a preliminary investigation shows that there remains a persistent and consequential gap between legal recognition and effective access, which directly and disproportionately affects young women. My work focuses on areas where this discrepancy is most visible. The first concerns access to reproductive autonomy, specifically access to voluntary termination of pregnancy.

Since 1978, Italian law has guaranteed this right. However, its implementation is obstructed by the widespread use of conscientious objection, which involves approximately 70% of medical professionals. Access to the service is extremely uneven, with many regions reporting almost total objection among medical and nursing staff. Women, particularly young women, women with limited economic resources, and migrant women, are disproportionately affected. This translates into the factual impossibility of exercising reproductive autonomy and exposes them to unsafe practices.

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Another area of concern is sexual education in secondary schools. Italy remains one of the few European countries without a mandatory national framework for comprehensive sexual education. Provision remains dependent on regional initiatives, which reinforces territorial disparities. This issue is particularly relevant in the current Italian landscape, as recent developments have considerably limited access to this education by restricting content and requiring parental consent. The lack of education on relationships and consent should not be welcomed, particularly in a country with statistically rising victims of physical, psychological, and sexual violence. This absence of education perpetuates misinformation, stereotypes, and unequal power dynamics, with consequences for young women and LGBTQ+ students. The third area concerns discriminatory employment practices affecting young women. Despite statistically high levels of education, Italian women continue to face systematic disadvantages at the point of entry into the labour market.

Peer-reviewed evidence shows gender bias in hiring decisions, indicating a preference for male candidates even when candidates have equal qualifications and experience. This inequality is not merely one of opportunity. These early barriers have long-term discriminatory impacts on economic security, career progression, and social inclusion, which are intensified for women with migrant backgrounds, as shown in my preliminary investigation. These disparities have consequences for the Italian economy as a whole. I chose to focus on these areas because they represent key stages in women's lives, and although they remain structurally distinct, addressing them together allows us to see how inequality is systematically reproduced across time rather than appearing as isolated failures of the system. My work with the Italian national context aims to identify solutions that are rights-based, youth-centred, and culturally responsive. I look forward to working with this council to ensure that gender equality is not merely affirmed but realized. Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

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**Konstantina Manoli (Ambassador, Greece):** Thank you. Hello everyone. Hello to fellow ambassadors. My name is Konstantina Manoli, and I am honored to serve as a Global Ambassador representing Greece. It is a privilege to present the gender equality priorities we aim to address during this term, based on research, youth engagement, and survivor-centered approaches in Greece. While significant progress has been made in gender equality, serious challenges remain. The three key issues we will be focusing on are intimate partner and family violence, sexual harassment in the workplace, and discrimination against migrant and refugee women within protection systems. These issues reflect persistent structural inequalities that continue to limit women's safety, autonomy, and equal participation in society.

The causes of these challenges are deeply rooted in historical and structural factors. Patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles continue to normalize power imbalances in both private and public spaces. Economic inequality and labor precarity increase women's vulnerability, while institutional gaps and inconsistent enforcement of existing laws reduce trust in protection systems.

Additionally, migrant and refugee women face intersectional discrimination linked to gender, migration status, and systemic barriers to services. The implications of these inequalities are profound. Gender-based violence threatens women's physical and mental health and restricts their participation in public life. Workplace harassment undermines women's economic independence and career advancement. Discrimination within protection systems exposes migrant and refugee women to heightened risks of exploitation, violence, and social exclusion. These challenges do not only affect individuals; they also weaken social cohesion, economic development, and democratic equality in Greece. Addressing these issues requires coordinated action through legal reform, education, institutional accountability, and community-based, survivor-centered solutions. I look

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forward to working collaboratively with all of you to advance meaningful and lasting gender equality. Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Wasan Alnaimat (Ambassador, Jordan):** Thank you so much, Your Excellency Mr. Chairperson, distinguished ambassadors, esteemed colleagues, united by a shared mission and common purpose. It is an honor to stand before you today as the Global Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and as the proud leader of the Jordan National Youth Research Team, a group of committed young researchers who embody the intellect, resilience, and determination of Jordan's rising generation. Together, we carry a national responsibility to confront inequality with the truth, to challenge complacency with evidence, and to advance the dignity of every woman in our country.

Jordan has long believed that the strength of a nation lies in the strength of its people. Yet the evidence before us is clear: gender inequality continues to constrain our national potential. The work of my team and I focuses on three interconnected pillars: economic empowerment, political leadership, and social protection.

First, the economic participation paradox. Jordanian women are among the most educated in the Middle East, consistently outperforming men in university graduation rates. Yet, despite this excellence, women's participation in the labor market remains among the lowest globally. This is not a failure of women; this is a failure of systems, policies, and structures. Limited transportation, inadequate childcare, weak workplace protections, and the uneven burden of unpaid care work continue to restrict women's economic mobility and independence. This exclusion comes at a high national cost. Economic estimates show that closing the gender participation gap could increase Jordan's GDP by over 20%. A nation cannot rise when half of its talent remains underutilized.

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The second issue is political representation to leadership. Jordan has taken meaningful steps toward political modernization, and we recognize these reforms with pride. However, women's political participation must move beyond mere presence. Women must not only have seats at the table—they must be heard, empowered, and trusted as decision-makers. High campaign costs, limited access to party leadership, and persistent social pressures continue to marginalize women from the center of political influence. My national team and I are committed to documenting these barriers and advancing solutions that elevate women from participation to substantive leadership.

The third issue is social protection and safety. No society can count progress if its women are not safe. Sexual and gender-based violence, too often hidden and silenced, remains one of the most urgent challenges in Jordan. Gaps in legal protection, survivor services, and community-level awareness disproportionately affect women in rural areas, refugee communities, and other marginalized groups. Safety is not only a women's issue; it is a national responsibility, a foundation of human dignity, and a core requirement for equality.

Our work as a national youth team will guide a nationwide mixed-methods research agenda that includes national data analysis, university surveys, qualitative interviews, and regional consultations across the north, center, and south of Jordan. Our aim is to produce evidence that does not sit on shelves but informs policy, transforms institutions, and amplifies voices that have been excluded from formal narratives.

Jordan's youth are not observers of change; we are drivers of change. We don't wait for solutions—we already build them. Your Excellency, Jordan's history teaches us that resilience is not passive; it is intentional and rooted in leadership. The women of Jordan are not waiting for

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permission to participate—they are waiting for systems that recognize their worth, protect their dignity, and unlock their power. Thank you so much.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Bibhuti Thapaliya (Ambassador, Nepal):** Honorable Chair and my fellow ambassadors, thank you for this opportunity. I am glad to be here, and it's so great to hear everyone's reports firsthand because I can see a lot of common points emerging, and I am excited for the opportunity for further collaboration. My name is Bibhuti Tapalia, and I represent Nepal as an ambassador. I come from a country where gender inequality is rarely loud, but it is very constant. It is built into daily lives, into homes, into institutions, and into what we learn and accept as normal.

In Nepal, patriarchy is not always violent. Most of the time it is quiet. It lives in routines, expectations, and lessons we are taught so early that we stop questioning them. We learn that care is our responsibility, sacrifice is our virtue, and silence is our safety. No one calls this oppression; it is called culture. It is called values. That is why my work does not begin with where inequality exists but with asking why it is so rarely questioned. That frames almost all of the issues my team and I are working on this year.

The first issue my team and I will focus on is unpaid care and household labor as structural drivers of women's economic dependence in Nepal. Women spend nearly three times more hours than men on unpaid care. The work at home is almost always undervalued and taken as expected. Even when women enter paid work, the work at home does not decrease. This double burden quietly limits women's economic independence, mental well-being, and sense of possibility. This labor sustains households and the national economy, yet remains invisible in policy. It is uncouned in economic metrics and almost always uncompensated. This produces economic dependence, limits career

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mobility, and leads to chronic exhaustion and poor mental health. The economy runs on women's unpaid work while denying them economic power.

The second issue is reproductive autonomy. Barriers to sexual and reproductive health rights mean that while services may exist on paper, real autonomy almost never exists in many rural communities. Girls grow up without accurate information, privacy, or decision-making power regarding their own bodies. Early marriage, stigmas surrounding sexuality, and family control over reproductive choices mean that pregnancy and childbirth are often outcomes of obligation rather than consent. This disproportionately affects adolescent girls and young married women, leading to high rates of school dropout, health complications, and long-term economic vulnerability.

The third issue is menstruation without dignity, which constitutes a violation of sexual and reproductive rights in Nepal. Despite being criminalized, practices such as *chhaupadi*—where women are banished to an animal shed or sacred house during their periods—and many other taboos continue. Menstruation is still framed as something impure rather than a biological process. Girls are restricted from kitchens, schools, religious spaces, and sometimes isolated in unsafe conditions. Beyond physical risk, the psychological impact is profound. Girls learn early that their bodies are dangerous and their presence is conditional. This affects education, self-worth, and long-term participation in public life, particularly among rural and marginalized communities.

The fourth issue is that violence is not an exception. Gender-based violence is an everyday insecurity for women in Nepal and reflects how inequality is normalized. Nearly 80% of reported cases are domestic violence. Yet violence is frequently treated as a private family matter rather than a public rights violation. Survivors face stigma, economic dependence, fear of social exclusion, and weak

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survivor-centered justice mechanisms. Indigenous women and economically dependent women are most affected.

The final issue is women's political participation and electoral barriers. Although Nepal meets constitutional quotas for women, this is mostly due to proportional representation rather than direct representation. In the upcoming election on March 5th, only 336 women are fielded compared to 2,925 men. This clearly shows the disparity between women and men in political participation.

These are the issues my team and I will focus on this year. I will focus on making this normalization visible through intersectional, community-rooted research that centers lived experience alongside evidence and pushes for structural, not just tokenistic, changes that exist only on paper. Thank you, everyone.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Najat Seidu (Ambassador, Ghana):** Thank you very much, Honorable Chair, Deputy Chairperson. Greetings to the Honorable Chairperson, fellow ambassadors, and all protocol observed. My name is Najat Seidu, Ambassador for Ghana on the Council, and I'm delighted to be present at today's gathering for the Preliminary Investigation Conference in Ghana. Gender inequality is driven mainly by child marriage, sexual and gender-based violence, and barriers to political participation. These issues are interconnected and multifaceted. Adolescent girls, young women, and persons living with disabilities suffer severely in these situations. While policies exist to address these issues, many factors hinder proper implementation.

Some policies may also require review in order to be successfully implemented. One major problem in addressing child marriage is the conflict between traditional law and national law, resulting in ineffective child protection. In this case, the law exists, but tradition and customs overpower national

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policy. Regarding sexual and gender-based violence, victims are often hesitant to report due to the lack of financial support and rescue centers. While a fund is established by law to support victims with shelter, legal aid, and rehabilitation, the domestic fund receives a very low allocation—less than 0.01% of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection budget.

The effects of these issues are dire, as they impact the nation's progress. Child marriage limits girls' education. Teenage pregnancy rates increase, affecting girls' potential to occupy high positions and reducing economic empowerment, which is a human rights issue. As an ambassador, I will work tirelessly with my national team to address this issue.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Cathia Itoua-Bienaymé (Ambassador, Republic of Congo):** Hello everyone. I am from the Republic of Congo, a country in Central Africa. For my research, I focus on two main gender inequality issues in my country. The first is sexual and gender-based violence, and the second is related to education.

Regarding the first issue, sexual and gender-based violence—including domestic violence, psychological abuse, economic coercion, and marital violence—is widespread and severe. Many forms of violence are socially normalized or insufficiently addressed by law. Women, adolescent girls, displaced populations, and women living in formal settlements are disproportionately affected. The persistence of these issues is driven by patriarchal norms, women's economic dependency, weak enforcement of protective laws, and the coexistence of formal and customary justice systems, which often silence survivors in the name of family or social harmony.

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The second issue relates to education. Congo is somewhat different from other African countries because we do not have forced child marriage, nor do we choose husbands for our children. However, cultural norms mean that a girl is not allowed to remain in her father's household if she becomes pregnant. For example, if a girl is 10, 11, or 15 and becomes pregnant, she is no longer allowed to stay at home and must live with her husband or the father of her child. One of the consequences of this is that many girls are unable to continue their studies or pursue higher education. This is the second issue I focus on in my research, and I plan to work on this throughout the year with other organizations in my country and the Ministry of Women and Youth.

Thank you so much.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

*The record reflects that the Ambassador for Rwanda was called to present and was not in attendance.*

**Giulia Presutti (Ambassador, France):** Honorable Chairperson, distinguished fellow ambassadors, thank you for the floor. My name is Giulia Presutti. I'm currently working for UNICEF and have previously worked for five United Nations agencies. I am proud to serve as Global Ambassador for France. During my mandate, I intend to address three interrelated gender inequality issues in France.

The first concerns gender inequality in education pathways, particularly the persistent underrepresentation of girls in elite and scientific tracks. The second focuses on gender mental health inequalities, with girls and young women disproportionately impacted by anxiety, self-harm, suicide attempts, and cyber violence. The third examines gendered religious discrimination affecting Muslim women and girls, notably in relation to dress codes, access to education, and employment.

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Regarding education, the French government often presents girls' academic performance as evidence that gender equality has been achieved. However, this narrative can conceal structural disparities. Despite equal or higher academic achievement, girls remain less likely to access selective scientific pathways. These inequalities are driven by early academic orientation procedures, gender stereotypes embedded within institutions and families, and experiences of sexism in learning environments. Social class and immigration background further compound these dynamics, producing unequal educational trajectories. The disparities reflect institutional and social mechanisms rather than differences in ability.

The second issue, gendered mental health inequality, has become increasingly visible in France. Girls and young women are disproportionately affected by anxiety, depressive symptoms, self-harm, and suicide attempts, particularly since 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic. These outcomes are shaped by gendered exposure to violence, online harassment, academic pressure, and unequal responsibilities, combined with a mental health system under significant strain. Addressing these challenges requires moving beyond equalized explanations toward gender-sensitive prevention and support policies.

Finally, I will address gendered religious discrimination against Muslim women and girls. Legal frameworks and public debates surrounding dress codes have disproportionately restricted their access to education, employment, and public life. This form of discrimination is deeply intersectional, combining gender, religion, race, and social class, producing durable inequalities across educational and professional trajectories.

This focus matters not only from a policy and human rights perspective, but also because it reflects lived realities within my own national team. Two members of the French national team are directly

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exposed to these dynamics, and their experiences and engagement influenced my decision to make this a core focus of my mandate. Through this work, I aim to promote evidence-based change and youth-informed approaches that address structural inequality and ensure that gender equality in France is not only formally recognized but effectively realized.

Thank you so much for your time and attention. I yield the floor back to you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Saad Bin Sarfraz (Ambassador, Pakistan):** Hello and warm greetings to you all. It is a privilege to address this council. I am Saad Bin Sarfraz, a master's student of Public Policy and Governance, and I have the honor of serving as the Global Ambassador for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Today, I present five interconnected gender inequality challenges that my national team and I will address over the coming year.

First, family-based control, forced marriage, and gender-based violence. In Pakistan, approximately 18% of women aged 20 to 24 are married before the age of 18. This statistic represents interrupted education, compromised health, and denied consent. These practices persist due to patriarchal norms where concepts of honor often override individual autonomy.

Second, maternal health and reproductive decision-making. Pakistan's maternal mortality ratio remains around 186 deaths per 100,000 live births, reflecting structural gaps in healthcare access, reproductive autonomy, and rural service delivery.

Third, women's economic participation and informal labor. Female labor force participation remains around 22 to 24%, with most women concentrated in unpaid or informal sectors. Closing this gap is not only a matter of justice but also of national development.

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Fourth, legal identity, inheritance, and citizenship exclusion affecting women and transgender persons, where constitutional guarantees often fail in implementation.

Last but not least is the emerging challenge of artificial intelligence and digital gender harm. Deepfake abuse and online harassment are extending gender-based violence into digital spaces, with severe reputational and psychological consequences. This area particularly resonates with me, as AI governance is my area of research during my master's studies, and it remains significantly underexplored within Pakistan's policy landscape, especially from a gendered perspective. Without proactive regulation and ethical oversight, emerging technologies risk reproducing structural inequalities under the guise of innovation.

Addressing these challenges requires coordinated institutional engagement. Key stakeholders include the Prime Minister's Youth Program, which can mobilize youth advocacy and digital literacy initiatives; the Ministry of Planning and Development, which plays a critical role in integrating gender-responsive budgeting and policy design into national frameworks; and the National Human Rights Commission, which serves as an oversight body to monitor rights violations and strengthen accountability mechanisms. As a researcher from Pakistan, my motivation is rooted in witnessing how structural inequalities silence potential, particularly among women in rural and marginalized communities.

Through a youth-led, mixed-method national research initiative, our aim is to bridge the gap between law and lived reality. Gender equality in Pakistan is not merely a social aspiration—it is a governance, development, and human rights imperative. I look forward to working with the council to advance solutions that are grounded and globally informed. Thank you all.

*The record reflects that one question was asked.*

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**Andres Stiven Bautista Martinez (Ambassador, Colombia):** What is your strategy to face the possible resistance with important stakeholders and important religious stakeholders in this matter especially about marriage?

**Saad Bin Sarfraz (Ambassador, Pakistan):** We do have a strategy to address forced marriage in Pakistan. At the federal level, it is legally recognized that there should be no marriage between children under the age of 16. To enforce this, we have a mechanism involving nikah registrars and union councils. A nikah is the contract between a husband and wife, and it is a registered deed. Any unregistered or illegal marriage should be dealt with under the strict laws available in the Constitution of Pakistan.

However, an issue arises after the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which devolved powers to the provinces. Each province now has different laws regarding forced and child marriages. Resistance can come from provincial governments as well as orthodox religious groups. To address this, we will engage the federal government, the National Human Rights Commission, and the Ministry of Planning and Development, which is already undertaking such initiatives. I will also focus on forced marriages and women's development in Parliament.

*The record reflects that the Ambassador for Chile was called to present and was not in attendance.*

**Victoria Kendi (Ambassador, Kenya):** Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Victoria Kendi. I'm a final-year law student, and I am honored to serve as Kenya's Global Ambassador, representing our national team. This work is deeply personal to me. As a law student, I have studied the promise of Kenya's legal framework—its strong constitution, constitutional guarantees of equality, dignity, freedom, and freedom from discrimination.

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But as a Kenyan woman, I have also witnessed the distance between law as written and law as lived. For many women, girls, and members of the LGBTQ community, legal protection remains uneven, inaccessible, or entirely absent. Laws may exist on paper, but enforcement is inconsistent, and social barriers often prevent people from accessing justice. The realities are urgent and often devastating. For instance, femicide, despite its alarming prevalence, is not formally recognized as a national crisis in Kenya. There is no distinct legal framework to address it as a systemic issue. Gender-based killings are often treated as isolated criminal acts rather than part of a pattern that demands coordinated prevention, data collection, and accountability. This is not just a statistic—it represents mothers, daughters, and sisters whose lives are cut short, families that are shattered, and communities that live in fear.

At the same time, sections 162 and 165 of the Penal Code criminalize same-sex relationships in Kenya. These laws do more than punish; they legitimize stigma, fear, and exclusion, limiting access to healthcare, justice, and protection for LGBTQ persons. Survivors of sexual violence and discrimination often remain silent, fearing retribution, harassment, or criminalization. Gaps in enforcement of the Sexual Offenses Act, combined with inequalities in family, inheritance, and labor law, further entrench vulnerability. Women in rural or informal communities are disproportionately affected. A widow may be disinherited, a young woman may be trapped in an abusive relationship, and a survivor may be unable to access justice due to fear, social pressure, or stigma.

These are not abstract issues—they are lived realities that demand urgent attention. These challenges are deeply interconnected. Economic exclusion makes women more vulnerable to violence. Survivors who fear stigma or criminalization are less likely to seek justice. When women and sexual minorities are excluded from leadership and decision-making, the systems meant to protect them fail

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before they even begin. Change cannot begin in isolation; it requires understanding these connections and addressing them together.

Our national team is therefore preparing to confront these issues with clarity and strategy. A central pillar of our work is strategic stakeholder mapping because change is only possible when the right actors are involved. Government ministries, county governments, and constitutional commissions are critical because they shape policies, allocate resources, and enforce accountability. Civil society organizations and grassroots groups are equally important, as they work closest with survivors, build trust, and fill gaps often left by the state. Youth-led movements bring agency, innovation, and the ability to mobilize narratives that resonate with younger populations.

We are also intentionally engaging stakeholders who are often underestimated in gender equality work, such as community and religious leaders who influence social norms, family decisions, and community responses to violence. Private sector actors determine economic opportunity through fair pay, decent work, and safe workplaces. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse, deciding whether femicide and sexual violence are sensationalized, ignored, or recognized as national crises requiring collective action.

For me, being an ambassador is about responsibility. It is about translating lived realities into policy, ensuring that decisions at institutional levels reflect the experiences of those most affected. It is about making the invisible visible, the silenced heard, and the ignored accounted for. It is also about working collaboratively with my fellow national team members to ensure that our advocacy is strategic, evidence-based, and grounded in the rule of law while remaining deeply human.

Ultimately, gender equality in Kenya is not only about laws or policies. It is about safety, dignity, opportunity, and having a voice. It is about whether women and LGBTQ+ persons are protected,

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believed, and included—not just in theory, but in practice. It is about whether survivors of violence can access justice without fear, whether women entrepreneurs can grow their businesses without discrimination, and whether young LGBTQ+ people can live openly without harassment. This is the work we are preparing to undertake. It is urgent, complex, and necessary. It is a responsibility I carry with purpose, clarity, and conviction. Thank you.

**Zijia Kevin Guo (Deputy Chairperson & Director, Research & Education):** I agree with what Victoria said. No issue exists in isolation. Every challenge is a collection of economic, legal, and political factors, public and private, institutional or community-based. A truly solution-oriented approach requires us to examine all these aspects separately and together.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Ata Ullah (Ambassador, Bangladesh):** Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, wherever you are. Honorable Chairperson, respected members of the council, and fellow ambassadors, my name is Ata, and I am a global ambassador representing Bangladesh. I speak today with a focus on gender inequality and its effects on the nation of Bangladesh, particularly on groups like the Rohingya refugees living in refugee contexts in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, especially regarding access to education and higher education. The core issue I am addressing is that gender inequality among Rohingya refugees is not accidental or cultural; it is structural. It is produced by legal exclusion, gender-insensitive education systems, and inadequate attention to psychological trauma, which disproportionately affects girls, particularly in learning centers.

The first issue I am addressing is the legal and policy barriers to formal education. Rohingya refugees are legally excluded from Bangladesh's national education system. This affects all children

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but has deeper and more permanent consequences for girls. Education in the camps is informal, uncertified, and often interrupted. Families are more likely to withdraw girls from education during adolescence due to domestic responsibilities and mobility restrictions. This results in lifelong educational deprivation for girls and reinforces intergenerational gender inequality in the community.

The second issue is inequality in educational infrastructure and the learning environment. Education in the camps is designed as a temporary emergency response, not as a long-term system. Overcrowded classrooms, lack of separate sanitation facilities, limited safety measures, and a shortage of female teachers disproportionately impact girls. Many families withdraw their daughters not because they oppose education, but because the environment is unsafe or inappropriate. In this way, infrastructure itself becomes a mechanism of gender exclusion.

The third issue is psychological trauma and its impact on education. Girls in the camps experience trauma from displacement, exposure to violence, confinement, and prolonged uncertainty. This affects their confidence, concentration, and participation in learning. Education spaces rarely integrate trauma-informed approaches or provide psychological support. When trauma is ignored, girls disengage quietly, and inequality becomes invisible. Key stakeholders affected include families, community leaders, humanitarian education providers, and national and international policy actors.

This issue matters deeply to me because it is not only about research, but also about being part of the community and the country where I live. I have witnessed how girls' potential is systematically limited—not by lack of ability, but by lack of access, protection, and supportive systems. One critical statistic highlights that less than half of adolescent girls remain engaged in learning activities. Early dropout and higher rates of child marriage result from inadequate facilities and limited access

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to education. This is not just about numbers—it represents a loss of leadership, agency, and future potential for the next generation.

Through this work, my goal is to advocate and conduct research to address these invisible issues, bringing them to the attention of the international community and stakeholders responsible for supporting inclusive systems. The aim is to ensure all children, especially girls, can enroll in education without discrimination or fear, in safe and enabling environments that allow them to succeed and lead.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share my work. I look forward to learning from other ambassadors from different countries. Thank you all.

**Zijia Kevin Guo (Deputy Chairperson & Director, Research & Education):** I thank the ambassador from Bangladesh for his speech. He raised a very specific issue. The lack of funding into educational infrastructure is not only a political issue but a reflection of a social psychology rooted in gender injustice. And I'm sure the same phenomenon can be found in many countries represented by many ambassadors here at this conference, not least those countries in the third world. It's a very common issue, I'm sure.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

*The record reflects that the Ambassador for Afghanistan was called to present and was not in attendance.*

**Silvain Akonkwa (Ambassador, Democratic Republic of the Congo):** Dear Chairperson, deputy Chairperson, distinguished fellow ambassadors, good day.

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My name is Silvain Akonkwa, and I am honored to serve as the ambassador representing the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Today, I would like to briefly present the key gender inequality issues that my research focuses on in our country. My intervention is grounded not only in global reports but also in community-level data and testimonies collected directly on the ground. Combining literature review and a digital community survey analyzed using PowerBI, we engaged parents, teachers, students, youth, community leaders, and local organizations.

Our findings are clear. Over 62% of respondents confirmed that girls drop out of school earlier than boys, particularly after primary education. More than 65% identified financial barriers as the primary cause, while nearly 63% pointed to early marriage as the main cultural reason for girls leaving school. This brings me to the first issue: limited access to education for girls in our country. Dear Chairperson, this issue is the starting point of all others. In our country, it is related to armed conflict, poverty, and early marriage, pushing girls out of school and trapping them in cycles of violence and dependence.

The most affected stakeholders include girls, women, and local communities, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas. When education ends, vulnerability begins. This brings us to the second issue: early and forced marriage. Dear Chairperson, poverty and high dowry demands push families to exchange girls for financial gain. Many girls marry without choice, without a future, and without understanding. UNICEF confirms this reality in conflict-affected communities like ours. Early marriage does not protect girls; it exposes them. It places them directly in the path of the next issue: sexual and gender-based violence. War in our country has turned women's bodies into battlefields. Women are killed, raped, and many survivors receive no medical or psychological support. According to UNFPA, this violence continues because protection and justice remain weak.

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Despite bearing the heaviest burden, women are largely absent from decision-making spaces in our country. This leads to the fourth issue: barriers to women's political participation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Even when women suffer the most, they are often absent where decisions are made. Cultural norms and economic dependence silence their voices, especially at the local level.

Dear Chairperson, this research matters to me because beyond global reports and statistics, I have seen, heard, and lived these realities. These issues are not separate; they are a chain. A girl who leaves school is more likely to be married early. A girl married early is more exposed to violence. A woman affected by violence is excluded from leadership. This research combines data, voices, a community survey, and visual evidence to ensure that local realities shape global gender discussions, beyond Eurocentric interpretations.

Thank you so much.

**Zijia Kevin Guo (Deputy Chairperson & Director, Research & Education):** I thank the ambassador from the Democratic Republic of Congo for that speech. That was a very personal presentation with some very touching statements and expressions and a manifesto of action. The ambassador represents a geographically and culturally vast country with limited transportation and infrastructure. Despite those obstacles, he succeeded in implementing a survey with a very wide coverage, collecting and articulating the voices of his local community members, a feat which I found to be extremely impressive.

*The record reflects that one question was asked.*

**Fawzi Ahmed (Ambassador, Sudan):** I'm from Sudan and we can relate to the issues of political participation of women in political participation and decision making. I would like to ask the

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Ambassador from the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo if they have any mechanisms to involve the woman in political participation.

**Silvain Akonkwa (Ambassador, Democratic Republic of the Congo):** Yes, there is a mechanism in our country actually in our Constitution. There is an article that defines that women are free to get involved in political participation in decision making in our country. Actually there is a mechanism but it's not respected. It's there just like a scriptures but there is nothing happening around this article. Thank you.

*The record reflects that the Ambassador for Liberia was called to present and was not in attendance.*

**Tejasvini Adya Murugan Mangaiyarkarasi (Ambassador, Australia):** Chairperson, deputy Chairperson, council members, fellow ambassadors, it's a privilege to speak today. I am Tejasvini, pursuing a master's in International Relations at Macquarie University, and I am honored to serve as Australia's ambassador with the International Youth Council on Gender Equality. Imagine a country where success is determined by talent, not gender. For many in Australia, that is still out of reach.

Women and gender-diverse people face unequal pay, discrimination, harassment, and overwork. Leadership favors men. Women bear most unpaid work, and for gender-diverse people, intersecting barriers compound inequalities even further. As an international student, I have seen how culture, opportunity, and identity shape lives. Today, I highlight three urgent realities: the gender pay gap, health inequities, and gender-based violence. These are not statistics—they are daily barriers to human potential.

Women earn 88 cents for every dollar a man earns. Indigenous and migrant women face even greater disparities, while leadership remains overwhelmingly male, rooted in undervalued work, structural

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bias, and caregiving expectations. This leads to reduced earnings, diminished superannuation, financial dependency, and higher poverty risk, especially for women facing violence. Closing the pay gap could add \$93 billion to Australia's economy.

Health and mental well-being are also central to equality. Nearly half of Australian women report mental health challenges from work-life imbalance, caregiving, burnout, and reproductive health issues, with migrant, First Nations, and LBQ+ communities facing added barriers from cultural mistrust, stigma, and limited access to care.

Violence casts a shadow over one in three Australian women through intimate partner, family, and sexual violence. Studies from Australian classrooms show how online and peer culture normalize misogyny and harassment among boys. While the national plan to end violence provides a framework, implementation gaps persist. Every act of violence is both a personal tragedy and a societal failure.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is not just a policy discussion. Gender equality is about justice, unlocking potential, and breaking barriers. Gender is not simply male or female—it is diverse and shaped by the world around us. From migrant and Indigenous communities to LGBTQ+ people, and even in how bushfires, floods, and heatwaves impact lives, gender intersects with every part of society.

At the heart of our work are three urgent battles: fair pay, health and mental well-being, and freedom from violence. Together with Australia's national team, I am committed to building inclusive spaces and solutions where no voice is left unheard.

Thank you.

*The record reflects that one question was asked.*

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**Chiara Guerra (Ambassador, Italy):** I thank the ambassador for a clear explanation. Being in Australia myself, I wanted to ask—across all the areas you mentioned—are you taking a specific approach reflecting the intersectional discrimination faced by First Nations and Indigenous women? Thank you.

**Zijia Kevin Guo (Deputy Chairperson & Director, Research & Education):** Thank you for bringing that up. I actually live in Canada, which has a significant First Nations presence, and I personally had the pleasure of living for two years on the boundary of a First Nations reserve. We recognize, both in our nation and in countries like Australia and New Zealand, that women from First Nations communities face much more significant barriers than their mainstream counterparts. Do you have any responses or comments on that, Ambassador from Australia?

**Tejasvini Adya Murugan Mangaiyarkarasi (Ambassador, Australia):** Yes. Something I found fascinating when I came to Australia was that whenever a university term or program begins, they always acknowledge Aboriginal women. This has become a way to represent First Nations people. When positions are available, special consideration is often given to First Nations applicants. For example, when I applied for a job, there were clear indications that First Nations candidates were encouraged to apply. I think this is an important step.

However, when it comes to broader gender equality awareness, there is still a gap. That is why we are planning interviews with members of parliament. We aim to conduct one this March with a First Nations representative, and we hope this interview will provide guidance on how to proceed with future initiatives.

Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

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*The record reflects that the Ambassador for India was called to present and was unable to due to internet difficulties.*

**Ali Daoudi (Ambassador, Yemen):** Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be with you. Dear Chairperson, deputy Chairperson, and esteemed fellow ambassadors, when we speak about gender justice in Yemen, we must begin with accuracy, not assumptions. Yemen is often discussed through what it lacks, but any honest conversation must also recognize what already exists.

These are things that we know as those living on the ground. In many parts of the country, women are given priority in public spaces, such as not standing in line. Military and police checkpoints often allow a car to pass if a woman is inside, out of respect. Testimonies of women are often believed across the country. These are not symbolic gestures—they are social norms rooted in respect and protection. This matters because it tells us we are not working with a society starting from disregard. We are working with a society that has values that can be improved and built upon.

Today, I'll touch briefly on the three interconnected issues our research paper focuses on and how they are being addressed. First is the role of transitional justice in ensuring protection does not depend on geography. Second is the emerging forms of gender-based harm, particularly in digital spaces. Third is the economic impact of rapid technological change on young women and the need for inclusive adaptation rather than exclusion.

There is a lot of great work being done by powerful women leaders and women-led organizations that are changing laws and advocating successfully. Our goals must be realistic and not duplicate the wonderful work already being done by allies.

When we speak about transitional justice, we must be precise. Reality is not uniform across Yemen. In areas with stronger institutional presence, progress is visible and women have more rights that are

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documented in law. More women are present today in government and public administration. Just yesterday, there were announcements of women in leadership roles in government, more so than before the armed conflict began.

At the same time, in some remote and underserved communities, harmful practices toward women still persist. Not because of hostility, but because law is distant, services are limited, and informal mechanisms replace formal accountability, which advocacy can change if done correctly. Transitional justice in this context is not about dismantling tradition; it is about ensuring that protection does not depend on tradition or geography and that dignity does not disappear where institutions are weakest.

Some of the most urgent risks facing women that we can address are in the realm of technology. The first is cybercrime linked to gender-based violence, including online blackmail, harassment, and misuse of personal information. These are among the most damaging threats facing women and girls. Yemen is particularly vulnerable due to a lack of digital awareness. This is not a cultural issue—it is a protection and governance issue. Policies are being put into place for blackmail and digital harassment, but more work is needed to keep up with the rapid expansion of technology.

Second, AI is reshaping the safeguards women have. For example, women who previously used Photoshop and editing skills to earn a living now face competition from AI that can replace much of that work. Capacity building and skills strengthening need to be implemented, which is not very costly but can significantly boost women's ability to compete in the marketplace and maintain their independence and dignity.

Finally, the challenge of reduced funding cannot be an excuse. Justice for women and girls is not optional. History shows that justice has never advanced through resources alone; it has advanced

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through will, wit, and persistence. Society is not judged by how it protects women in familiar spaces, but by how it protects them when harm takes new and unfamiliar forms. With our collective skills and commitment, and with the honor of being part of this team, we can make a lasting impact in the world.

Thank you very much.

**Zijia Kevin Guo (Deputy Chairperson & Director, Research & Education):** I thank the ambassador from Yemen for that presentation. I think he raised an important point. In the West, mainstream voices often characterize nations such as Yemen as fundamentally incompatible with the concept of gender equality. He articulated the values in Yemen that favor progressive improvement in gender justice, and we can support that through public advocacy and research. That is a very well-made point.

*The record reflects that two questions were asked.*

**Tejasvini Adya Murugan Mangaiyarkarasi (Ambassador, Australia):** There is something called a leveling hypothesis, where war is considered a factor in reducing inequalities. Do you think the ongoing conflict in Yemen will reduce inequality or increase it? What is your point of view on gender issues related to that?

**Ali Daoudi (Ambassador, Yemen):** Currently, the landscape is moving rapidly worldwide, and it's hard to predict the direction. What is certain is that people want a better life. They are pursuing dignity and independence, beyond just feeding their children today. In the context of armed conflict, classified under IHL, people are becoming more aware of their rights. As you saw yesterday in the internationally recognized government, more women are being appointed to powerful leadership

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roles. Whether society is ready or not, women leaders are taking control, ensuring safe spaces for women and girls. That trajectory is inevitable and, hopefully, will have a global impact.

**Luna Carrillo (Ambassadorial Coordinator, Office of the Chairperson):** Hello everyone. I haven't introduced myself—I'm from the chair team as well. I've been listening to all your speeches and taking notes, so you will be receiving feedback. Thank you for your speeches - they were all extremely interesting. Ali, I have a question about your research. You mentioned Yemen is divided. Is your research focused on the north or the south?

**Ali Daoudi (Ambassador, Yemen):** Due to access restrictions, it is tougher in the north; however, our approach is inclusive. Key informant interviews and focus discussion groups include women from the north as well. We are partnering with local civil society organizations that have access to women leaders across the country. Physically, much of the work is in the south, but we aim to have a full-country approach.

*The record reflects that the Ambassador for India was called to present again and was unable to due to persisting internet difficulties.*

**Manar Yassin (Research Fellow, Egypt):** Hello. I am Manar Yassin. I am one of the fellows on the Egypt team. Unfortunately, the ambassador couldn't attend today, so I am presenting our work to you. So today I'm presenting our primary report which is mainly focusing on three priority issues including gender based violence against women and girls, limited access to sexual reproductive health and rights, in addition to economic inequality and barriers to women's labor market participation.

At the first step, we are focusing mainly in general on gender based violence which is a deeply rooted issue within Egyptian society and mainly focusing against women and girls as intersection

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problem that is integrated and shaped by structural legal and social factors that increases the prevalence and the issue of the violence within the community and also this is impacted and increased by the rhetorical family structure position that position men as decision makers. In addition to that, the legal forms within Egypt exist but there is a huge gap without the legal laws and the enforcement and the application of this law. In addition, there are other issues or areas that lack any legalization regarding for example domestic violence legalization and marital rape. There is no code that criminalizes these issues despite other laws already implemented, and there is a huge gap of enforcement. As the law related to FGM, for example, it was criminalized under the law since 2008 but yet the prevalence remains high, for example, it has high prevalence that reaches 87%.

In addition to other types of violence that have occurred within the last years, for example killing of girls in the streets and other violences that have spread in the last few years. There is a huge implication for this GBB violence against women and girls which impacts their physical and psychological consequences, increasing the prevalence of psychological issues and problems, and also affecting their educational attainment, workforce participation and overall quality of life. So through our research and our presentation of solutions we are discussing what could prevent survivors from accessing existing legal and health services. We are also searching and questioning the solution of how the participation or integration of community level strategies could help towards decreasing the prevalence of GBB. And also provide a solution for the social norms and harmful gender norms that may increase the levels of GBB, especially issues related to FGM and child marriage. The other issue that we are also researching is the limited access to sexual and reproductive health rights and knowledge, especially for adolescents and girls and young adolescent women.

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They face many barriers such as stigma and limited youth-friendly counseling, fear of judgment, and restricted opportunities to learn accurate SRHR information, especially within the stigma of being women and girls unmarried asking about SRHR rights related to contraception or safe relationships. There is stigma around this, so there is limited access or limited channels. This limited knowledge about SRHR increases catastrophic impacts and implications overall, for example health risks and misinformation, and in addition reduces agency, especially for adolescent girls and young women, in being able to make the main decisions of their lives. For example, sometimes married young women did not have the choice to decide when to have children and how many children they should have. This forms a huge issue within the community and also impacts their ability to access vital information which may put them at risk.

In addition, other factors or intersectional areas may impact their ability to reach this knowledge, especially being in rural or marginalized areas or being concerned about other genders, which may act as a barrier against accessing this valuable information that may impact their health and psychological status. That's why we are presenting more concrete solutions and inquiries regarding the most common barriers to SRHR service, including for example, is it the post, privacy, stigma, or provider attitudes. We need to know this information to provide solutions and advocacy strategies and work with main stakeholders to solve this problem. We also need to know if there are already services and entry points that feel safe for younger women and adolescents to use, for example, mobile clinics or other help places that provide them with information and knowledge. Is there any locally grounded approach that can expand SRHR knowledge without imposing external frameworks?

This is all the questions and solutions that we need to extend our research to, to know more information and have a more concrete plan for advocacy. The last third issue of our research is

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economic inequality and barriers to women's work, researching how women face structural and social factors that prevent them and create constraints against being integrated within the labor force and being able to work and have equitable and safe places to work. These factors include unequal caregiving burdens, gendered expectations about appropriate work, limited childcare options, and unsafe streets for transportation and access to all types of work. There is also discrimination at different levels, for example in decision-making or workplaces.

*The record reflects that the Research Fellow for Egypt was reminded by the Deputy Chairperson of time constraints and asked to make their closing remarks.*

**Manar Yassin (Research Fellow, Egypt):** We are also sharing the implications of this on women being independent and lacking power, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and workplace discrimination and harassment. This may impact their ability to access safe workplaces, exercise agency and independence, and have economic empowerment within the community. We are inquiring and researching how workplace harassment and violence may impact women's accessibility to job opportunities and safe places, and also what interventions may be possible locally within workplaces, for example childcare, safe transport, and other mechanisms that support women in their ability to reach decent opportunities and seek work. Thank you so much.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Namgay Choden (Ambassador, Bhutan):** Good evening everyone, Chairperson, deputy Chairperson, and fellow ambassadors. Kuzua from the Kingdom of Bhutan. My name is Namgay Choden and I am a fourth-year law student here in Bhutan, and I have the honor of representing Bhutan as the ambassador here. Starting with my presentation, Bhutan is often celebrated as a country guided by the value of cross-national happiness, a place where harmony and well-being are

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central. Yet behind this image, many women in Bhutan continue to face barriers that limit their voices, their leadership, and their safety.

Today, I want to address two issues that deeply shape the lives of Bhutanese women, which are political underrepresentation and gender-based violence. Starting with our first issue on politics, we have constitutional guarantees and international commitments in Bhutan. However, women remain dramatically underrepresented in Bhutan's leadership. Women hold only 17 to 18% of parliamentary seats, and at the local level, women make only two out of 205 community leaders that we have in Bhutan. This is especially striking because women make up a majority of the registered voters. So we pondered upon the question of why this gap exists, and the answer was not lack of interest or ability but structural exclusion. In this, women in Bhutan are expected to manage households, care for children, and perform invisible labor that never counts in political life. Women who dare to enter politics face scrutiny, judgment, and social risks, which are pressures that men rarely face. Institutions from political parties to electoral frameworks often favor those with resources and connections, leaving women historically disadvantaged. The second issue is gender-based violence, which remains underreported in Bhutan.

Laws exist, including the Domestic Violence Prevention Act. But cultural norms, such as those emphasizing family privacy, reconciliation, and social harmony, often silence the survivors. This impact does not only affect women but children, families, and communities, which undermines trust in institutions and society itself. In this, the Bhutan team this year will be focusing on examining the barriers amplifying women's voices and exploring practical solutions from youth leadership programs to survivor-centered justice approaches that are grounded and sustainable. It is my hope that through this council we can reimagine Bhutan as a place where women are not only equal on

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paper but equal in opportunity, rights, and dignity. Thank you for listening, thank you for your time, and I look forward to working with all of you.

**Zijia Kevin Guo (Deputy Chairperson & Director, Research & Education):** I thank the ambassador from Bhutan for that beautiful presentation. I do sympathize with her statement on social expectations in my country, hers as well as in many other countries.

It is not any formalized legalized barriers that hold women back but social expectations that are embedded and hidden in tradition and customs. It is of course our mission to address those hidden obstacles and impediments.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Andres Stiven Bautista Martinez (Ambassador, Colombia):** Socrates warned us that the unexamined life is not worth living. Chairperson, deputy chairperson, excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I speak today as the Global Ambassador of Colombia on behalf of the Colombian delegation to address two interlinked challenges that continue to shape my country's development and human security: gender-based violence and women's economic exclusion. These are mutually reinforcing systems.

When violence rises, women's mobility, employment, and autonomy fall. When economic dependence increases, the risk of violence and the barriers to exit increase. The background is structural and historical. In Colombia, gender violence has been fueled by patriarchal norms, poverty, and weak enforcement, but also by the legacy of armed conflict. Official historical reporting documents 14,000 women victims of conflict-related sexual violence between 1958 to 2022, with 87% identified as Afro-Colombians, showing how race and gender intersect under coercive power. In everyday life, violence is also present inside homes, and an estimated 11.9% of women aged

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between 15 to 49 experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence within the year 2018. The implications are measurable and urgent. In 2023, the police registered 119,000 domestic violence cases, with women and girls representing roughly 70 to 77% of the victims. Health surveillance adds another layer. By mid-2024, medical services recorded 66,000 gender violation cases, 75.6% against women and 12.3% involving children under five.

These are not abstract numbers. They are evidence of a public health and protection crisis affecting women, families, and the next generation. The economic dimension identifies these risks. Many female-headed households are trapped in vulnerability. 37.7% live in poverty. Women also shoulder a disproportionate care burden, dedicating 17.6% of their time to unpaid domestic and care work versus 5.2% for men. And the OECD analysis highlights an average gap of roughly 22 more unpaid hours per week for women. This time poverty reduces pay, work skills accumulation, and bargaining power, reinforcing exposure to abuse. The groups most affected are clear: women and girls, especially in rural areas and conflict-affected territories, among the communities facing intersectional discrimination. One stark marker is that 61.8% of indigenous women heading households are in poverty. Stakeholders must therefore act as a single system: the national government and the Ministry of Equality, which we had a meeting with last week, and you can see on the website.

The INS, the health services, police and prosecutors, and civil society networks, such as Corporación Sysma Mujer and the Red Nacional de Mujeres, together with international partners like UN Women. There is also, finally, one under-discussed reality we should name with intellectual honesty. The same health data shows that men are victims too, and that social norms can silence them. In the medical service dataset, women's reporting rates are far higher than men's, and reports link male underreporting to social and cultural pressures such as hegemonic masculinity. Those pressures can

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translate into mental health harm. Men accounted for about 78.6% of suicides in early 2024. This is not a distraction from women's rights. This is a reminder that prevention must also engage men and boys, confront the social demand that a man's worth equals status or income, and stop violence before it reproduces itself inside families. Why does this matter personally?

Because gender equality is not only a moral obligation. It is a national capability. As the OECD has warned, mobilizing women's talent must be a priority for sustainable growth. Yet violence and exclusion destroy that potential. My personal motivation is simple: Colombia cannot be fully free, prosperous, or peaceful while half of its population navigates fear at home and barriers in the economy. That is why our delegation calls for integrated action that combines prevention, services, justice, strengthening, and economic pathways, and why employers, schools, and communities must be part of solutions, including practical measures such as workplace support for survivors. Finally, as Eleanor Roosevelt said, where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places close to home. Thank you very much.

**Zijia Kevin Guo (Deputy Chairperson & Director, Research & Education):** I thank the ambassador from Colombia for that wonderful speech. He has demonstrated a consistent and lamentable trend of inequality across every demographic and every sector, a narrative that is reinforced by his powerful use of extensive data.

I think he highlights a sense of urgency on our part. Every day delayed in concrete action in advancing gender equality is another life scarred, destroyed, or even lost. I commend him for the powerful emotion in which he articulated this message.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

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**Latifa Boubacar Saley (Ambassador, Niger):** Good morning dear fellow ambassadors and chair. I thank you for the floor. My name is Latifa.

I'm honored to attend this Preliminary Investigation Conference on gender equality, a critical and deeply rooted challenge particularly for women and girls living in rural areas and fragile contexts. The main issues I attempt to address include unequal access for early and forced marriage, limited economic empowerments of women and leadership and decision making spaces. This is the result of intersecting factors such as chronic poverty, strong social cultural norms, limited access choices, often resulting in girls being withdrawn from school at an early age to be married or to support household responsibilities. At the same time, women face structural barriers in accessing land, financial resources, vocational training and formal employment. The consequences of these inequalities are significant not only for women and girls but for society as a whole. Gender inequality slows national development, weakens social cohesion and perpetuates a cycle of poverty for women and girls. It translates into higher school dropout rates, increased maternal and reproductive health risk, economic dependency and limited participation in civic and political life.

So throughout my participation in this council, I hope to contribute to informed dialogue, youth-led advocacy and practical recommendation that can support sustainable and inclusive progress towards gender equality in nature and across our shared global context. Thank you very much for your attention. I look forward to our discussion and learning from the experience of my fellow ambassadors. Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Mosa Letsie (Ambassador, Lesotho):** Thank you chairperson, deputy chairperson, fellow ambassadors, distinguished colleagues. Good day. My name is Mosa Letsie and I'm pleased to

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represent the kingdom of Lesotho. Today I speak about gender inequality as it's lived and experienced by women and girls in Lesotho, particularly where gender based violence and large development project intersect.

My team and I will be relying on the Lesotho Highlands Water Project as our case study. This is one of the largest transboundary infrastructure projects currently implemented in the southern Africa region. Although Lesotho has committed to gender equality and inclusive development, unfortunately this commitment has not translated into equal and safe outcomes for women, particularly women affected by these large development projects.

Under our customary practices, women's access to land and property is often mediated through marriage, making their rights insecure and dependent on men. At the same time, gender based violence remains widespread and normalized. Poverty, unemployment and economic dependence increase women's vulnerability to abuse while fear, stigma and weak accountability discourage reporting and access to justice.

Unfortunately, large development projects aimed at driving the country's development trajectory interact with these already existing inequalities. For instance, the Lesotho Highlands Water Project was designed to harness water from the highlands of Lesotho to transfer to our neighboring country South Africa's economic hub in exchange for royalties and hydro electricity benefits that have generated tremendous national revenue. However, at the community level it is women who have borne the disproportionate cost of the project's implementation. This is because compensation is dispersed in favor of men as the recognized head of household, thus leaving many women vulnerable and dependent on their spouses or male counterparts. In addition, the women are already disempowered by poverty, unemployment and lack of information and education, which also

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increases the economic vulnerability and susceptibility to gender based violence. Cases of teenage pregnancies and school dropouts, transactional sex, sexual violence of young girls and increased HIV prevalence have also been reported to spiral upwards since implementation of the project, and these have been linked directly with the influx of immigrant contractors introduced into the project areas to work on the project.

This has not only led to an increase in gender based violence but has also disrupted the social local dynamics. These challenges persist despite the existence of strong legal and policy frameworks. For instance, the Lesotho Constitution and other key legislation formally guarantee equality between women and men and protection from violence. However, this is only on paper because women in practice, customary norms, institutional practices and project level policies continue to override this protection, and it is women who usually bear the disproportionate burden. This issue matters deeply to me, not only as a legal practitioner but as someone working closely with communities affected by large development projects. I have seen how law can either protect dignity or legitimize exclusion depending on how it is designed and enforced. So my team and I wish to leverage the opportunity of research to bridge this gap between law and policy and lived experiences. Firstly, we will use gender disaggregated data and community-based research to make women's experiences visible, particularly the links between land laws, economic insecurity, and gender based violence.

Secondly, we will rely on participatory research that centers women's voices, ensuring that solutions are shaped by those most affected rather than imposed from above. And thirdly, we will use evidence from the research to challenge assumptions that development is gender-neutral and therefore advocate for gender responsive project design, compensation systems, and safeguards. Finally, we will translate research findings into clear, accessible messages that can influence policy makers, project authorities, including project financiers like the African Development Bank, the New

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Development Bank, the Development Bank of Southern Africa, and community leaders, and hold institutions accountable for the real harms that are incurred by women as a result of development. In closing, I'd like to highlight that gender equality cannot be achieved through laws alone. It requires evidence, accountability, and action that transforms women's daily realities. If women are unsafe, excluded, or unheard, development is incomplete. Thank you.

**Zijia Kevin Guo (Deputy Chairperson & Director, Research & Education):** I thank the ambassador from Lesotho for that presentation. I think an interesting point she raised was that advancement in gender equality requires not only the communities themselves, the action from governments but also cooperation from for example the financial sectors, the banks and it is very important that she diversified our perspective and understanding in this regard.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Monroe Law (Ambassador, United States of America):** My name is Monroe Law and I'm a high school senior in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I'm deeply passionate about fighting for fundamental rights of marginalized communities in the US and I'm pleased to address you as the International Youth Council of Gender Equality United States Ambassador. The United States is often celebrated as a global leader in equality. Yet for millions of women and girls, that promise fractures the moment gender intersects with race, income, and power. Far removed from the ideals of the American dream, long proclaimed, confronting these inequities is not optional, but a civic responsibility. In response, my national team has identified three preliminary issues rooted in the lived experience of the pillars of my community. Our first issue is the economic impact of gender wage gaps on women of color, a product of the United States' prolonged history of identity-based exclusion.

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We found that this discrimination is intersectional, compounding race and gender into structural economic disadvantage. Peer-reviewed studies have shown that black women earn roughly 83 cents for every dollar earned by white males. And even those with doctoral degrees lose over 2.1 million in wages across a lifetime. This gap is not driven by education or effort, but by systemic segregation, and it similarly impacts other women of color, reinforcing cycles of generational poverty. Our second issue is gender inequality and healthcare, where race and income often determine care more than medical need. Women of color, especially black women, face dismissed symptoms and higher maternal mortality rates regardless of education or status. As an African-American woman, I've seen this firsthand in my own family where delayed and dismissive care shaped outcomes across generations, proof that these inequities reach far beyond into health and long-term stability and opportunity. Our third issue examines algorithmic inequality and gendered harm in digital spaces. While social media is often framed as democratizing, its algorithms reward outrage and surveillance disproportionately harming women, especially women of color and immigrant women.

These harms are intensified by the use of social media by agencies such as ICE, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, to monitor online activity and seemingly unbiased claims about citizenship or legal media without transparency or accountability. In a hyperconnected world, resisting these systems requires media literacy and vigilance as the digital platforms continue to reproduce, not dismantle, existing power hierarchies. Together, these issues reveal a critical truth. Gender inequality in the United States is not the result of individual failure, but institutional design. Adjusting it requires structural reform through pay equity legislation, healthcare access protections, and oversight of digital platforms paired with intentional civic engagement. This network matters because equality delayed is equality denied, and because a democracy cannot claim legitimacy while entire communities are systematically undervalued. Alongside my national team, I am committed to

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confronting these inequities through youth-driven action, amplifying marginalized voices and challenging the systems that sustain them. Thank you. I look forward to working with all of you in this investigation alongside my fellow ambassadors.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Sameer Yasin (Ambassador, India):** Greetings to the chair, the deputy chair, the IYCGE team, and my fellow ambassadors. My name is Sameer Yasin. I come from a minority community here in India and I am pursuing engineering with work experience in climate activism working with intergovernmental bodies, the United Nations Environment Program. Today I stand before you as the global ambassador of India at this forum. India is called the land of culture, tracing its roots from one of the earliest civilizations.

But behind the curtains of culture and spirituality, one reality is very clear. The invisible inequality that has persisted through centuries still exists today. Because of this, my team of fellows and I have compiled three major issues revolving around the Indian subcontinent. The first issue that I wish to highlight is the intersectional gender-based violence across caste and community lines. Gender-based violence in India is not an isolated or private issue. It is a widespread structural crisis affecting millions of women and gender-diverse people across social, economic, and cultural contexts. It is rooted in very entrenched patriarchal norms, caste hierarchies, and economic inequalities that normalize control over women's bodies and their choices. These patterns are shaped by historical legacies, social practices like dowry or the taboo of daughter births. The gaps between law and the lived reality are clearly visible and they are deeply damaging because they undermine the physical and mental health of women by restricting them from education, from having a livelihood, and therefore weakening them both socially and economically.

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The second issue that my team compiled is the structural limits of development around the exclusion of women from the workforce. India projects itself as Vixed Bharat, or a developed India, where we will have growth, human capital, and gender equality. But there is a major contradiction. Women's education and aspirations are rising rapidly but their access to dignified work remains extremely low. Despite near gender parity in higher education, the Indian workforce for women is only 37%, which is far below the global average. This is not because of the lack of aspirations or structural barriers. This is because of the unpaid care burdens, the patriarchal norms, and the labor market that stops women from participating and has introduced male-dominated jobs, excluding women from economic opportunity. Therefore, there is this one specific line that I have commonly heard: when women go out for work or to educate themselves, they are considered less Sanscari, which literally means lower in virtue.

I recently heard this in a drive that I was conducting. So that's a very major point that I wanted to keep here. The third issue is women's political representation, especially women from marginalized communities. India's constitution promises full political equality for women. We have had reforms guaranteeing 33% reservation for women in the Panchayat, which are the most grassroots, and we also had the Women's Reservation Act. This signals a very strong legal intent. Yet reality is very far behind because women hold only 15.1% of the parliamentary seats out of 1.5 billion people. Can you imagine only 15% of women are at the helm of our political leadership? This places India at the 151st position out of 182 countries. Now do not mistake this as a third-world country issue because India is in the top five when we look at the GDP and economic output.

How can a country this big be at the 151st position? This is not accidental. It is a structural gap, a barrier because male-dominated parties, money-driven elections, gendered violence, and caste exclusion still exist to this day. These issues are very personal to me because my own mother was

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forced to discontinue her PhD in clinical psychology. Not because she lacked the ability, but because society decided that her ambition was inconvenient for men. This is how inequality survives, not through law, but through permission. India does not lack laws. India has many laws but it lacks the intent to make sure they are implemented in practice. I would like to add a very small line in both Hindi and Urdu. It roughly translates to: equality is not a concession; it is a right, and we as humans all deserve equal rights. These are the major issues that the Indian team, my fellows, and I are going to work towards.

With this, I thank the IYCG team, the chair Adam, the deputy chair Kevin, and the ambassadors for being very patient and for enabling me to bring these issues to an international forum. Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Niyonshuti Jean Claude (Ambassador, Rwanda):** Evening, good afternoon, good morning wherever you are. Women hold 60% of state positions in the pyramid, one of the highest proportions in the world. Yet despite this political milestone, women still face persistent inequality at the household and community levels. Rwanda's total population is about 10 million, 61% of whom are women.

This majority underscores the importance of addressing the gender barriers that limit women's participation in society. In Rwanda, our team will focus on five research issues. The first is gender-based violence. Despite strong laws and support for gender-based violence survivors, about one in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence, highlighting the persistence of harmful norms, economic dependence, and unpaid care work. Although women's labor force participation exceeds 70%, they are overrepresented in informal and low-income sectors, performing unpaid work at home while women involved in earning work provide pay and money.

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In education, Rwanda achieved near gender parity in primary school, but girls remain underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, even in technical, vocational, and educational training, and digital literacy as well. Especially in rural areas, programs supporting school entry for adolescent girls are improving access, yet gaps remain. Disability and intersectionality is the fourth point we will focus on. Women with disabilities face compound exclusion and high risk of violence. Inclusive efforts by the national council for persons with disabilities are vital to ensure that gender policies are fully implementable.

The fifth issue is substantive political participation. While representation is high in the parliament, women continue to face barriers to influence in leadership and decision-making. Increasing mentorship and leadership pipelines remain essential. In conclusion, Rwanda's gender policy framework is strong, but real measurable impact depends on coordinated actions by government, civil society, and youth actors to translate policy into community-level outcomes for women and marginalized groups. Thank you very much.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Francess Tarpeh (Ambassador, Liberia):** Greetings everyone on behalf of my national team and I. My name is Francess Tarpeh representing one of the oldest West African countries, Liberia. I am so happy to be part of this initiative, International Youth Council on Gender Equity. Based on our research for our first assignment, we decided to dive into issues of gender-based violence, to be precise, rape. According to the report from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, rape is the highest incident category recorded during the period from July to September 2025, with 273 cases representing 57%, followed by intimate partner violence with 198 cases, representing 42%.

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GBV incident case strength per month in Liberia: of the 475 cases recorded during the quarter, 449 survivors are female, representing 95%, and only 26 are male, representing 5%. This data shows that females are highly vulnerable to SGBV incidents in Liberia. Our next topic is female political underrepresentation in Liberia. According to the women's legislature of Liberia and other associated advocates including UN Women, the poor representation of women in politics stems from deeply entrenched cultural norms and biases, which affect voter perception.

For example, men are seen as better decision-makers. High financial cost for campaigns, lack of party support, gender-based violence, and insufficient access to education or resources create systematic barriers to the common rights to vote and run. We have the background and problem: GBV, especially rape, remains widespread in Liberia, rooted in the civil war from 1989 to 2003, poverty, and weak institutions. Women and girls are most affected, especially in rural and slum communities. Structural and legal factors include weak law enforcement, slow court processes, limited police presence in cases, and courts, especially in rural and urban communities. Laws exist but enforcement is inconsistent. Many cases are settled informally, allowing perpetrators to escape justice. Cultural and economic factors, such as culture of silence and taboos, discourage reporting. Patriarchal norms increase vulnerability. Poverty leads to economic dependencies and transactional sex. Abuse by teachers, religious leaders, and authority figures is normalized.

Impact on survivors and communities: survivors face trauma, depression, unwanted pregnancy, HIV, ACE, and STI. Many drop out of school and withdraw from social communities. Communities suffer breakdown of trust and intergenerational trauma. National development is weakened by lost productivity and health costs. Stakeholder responses include Ministry of Gender, Safe Women Hotline, One-Stop Center, Ministry of Justice, Prosecution and Law Enforcement, NGOs, youth

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groups, counseling, advocacy, awareness campaigns, and proposals for a sex offense database to improve accountability.

Conclusion and way forward: GBV is a structural, legal, cultural, and economic issue. Laws alone are not enough. Solutions require strong enforcement, survivor-centered services, community education, youth engagement, and economic empowerment. Ending GBV is essential for justice, dignity, integrity, and national development. I pause here and await questions.

*The record reflects that the Deputy Chairperson called on the Ambassadors from Sudan, Chile, and Afghanistan to present once more but none were in attendance.*

**Luna Carrillo (Ambassadorial Coordinator, Office of the Chairperson):** Thank you all. Your speeches were absolutely amazing. Very interesting perspectives from every single one of you. You should start sharing contacts.

To change structural inequalities, like we have seen in every single country taking different shapes, one key is public speaking: the ability to convince people of something they have been culturally conditioned to believe. I encourage you all to use this education, use this privilege, and work more on this because it can really change everything. As we have seen, populism rises, and everything works because of the way you speak and how you can convince someone of something. Thank you everyone. I give you back the floor.

**Zijia Kevin Guo (Deputy Chairperson & Director, Research & Education):** On the conclusion of this conference, I just want to remark briefly that the diversity of this team, the extensive reach of this operation, and the aspiration of our ambitious project are things that have rarely been conceptualized and more seldom been successfully put into execution by people of our age group. This conference has welcomed about 35 ambassadors today, and that's not just 35 leaders, activists,

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and researchers whom we are, but 35 countries that we represent, 35 societies whose culture we articulate, and 35 communities whose rights and equality we seek to advance. Moving forward, the completion of your preliminary investigation so far and the dedication it will take for you to complete the rest of the global perspectives report should never cease to be a source of inspiration, pride, excitement, and moral satisfaction. Thank you very much indeed.

*Day I of the Preliminary Investigation Conference formally concluded.*

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### **Session 2: Sunday, February 8, 2026**

*Record reflects informal remarks were given by Chairperson, Adam Alkazely*

**Zijia Kevin Guo (Deputy Chairperson & Director, Research & Education):** I am the Director of Research and Education and Deputy Chairperson here at the IYCGE. My name is Zijia, and people just call me Kevin. I should remark at the beginning of this exciting occasion that we are all the authors and creators of the Global Perspectives Research Project and the Global Ambassadors Program, for which we should be intensely proud. I should also remark that a team so diverse in talents, an operation so extensive in reach, and an aspiration so noble in its aim belong to a project that has rarely been conceptualized and more seldom been successfully put into execution by people of our age.

By the end of this conference, we will have hosted nearly 70 global ambassadors from across the world. And that is just not 70 leaders, activists, and researchers whom we are, but 70 countries whom we represent on this occasion. 70 cultures whose epistemologies, knowledge we

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articulate, and 70 communities whose interests and inherent rights and equalities we seek to advance.

The time and energy it has taken us to complete the preliminary stage of the Global Perspectives Project, and the greater amount of commitment and dedication it will require us to finalize and complete the Global Perspectives Research Project as a whole, should never cease to be a matter of pride and moral satisfaction for every one of us.

So congratulations and good luck. And with that being said, I have the pleasure to call upon the Ambassador from Botswana.

**Gofiwa Mosweunyane (Ambassador, Botswana):** A very good evening to the Director and the Deputy Chairperson of the International Youth Council on Gender Equality. My name is — I am the Ambassador for Botswana. Gender equality — gender inequality — remains a major development challenge in our country, Botswana, despite having strong legal and policy frameworks, and this inequality is driven by three main interconnected issues which, in Botswana, we are going to focus on.

The first one is gender-based violence, GBV. Gender-based violence is rooted in patriarchal norms, cultural beliefs in male superiority, and power imbalances. It creates a system of power imbalance because men are deemed dominant over women. Gender-based violence is reinforced by economic dependency in Botswana. As young people, as youth of Botswana, we face the critical challenge of youth unemployment, and this is why most females or women stay in abusive relationships because of economic dependency.

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The other reason why gender-based violence is highly increasing is because of fear to report, stigma from society, weak enforcement of laws, and lack of trust in our own justice system. The second issue that we're going to focus on from Botswana is underrepresentation of women in leadership spaces. In Botswana, leadership is socially constructed as male. Women face stereotypes, resistance, lack of support, and lack of political funding and inclusion to contest for political and leadership spaces and decision-making structures.

Botswana uses a merit-based system in the political system, but despite that, qualified females and qualified women are still disadvantaged due to a male-dominated political system. The third issue that we are going to focus on from Botswana is economic inequality. In Botswana, women are concentrated in low-paying jobs, informal jobs, and insecure jobs, while men dominate asset ownership, land, and high-income sectors. Another aspect under economic inequality is cultural expectations of men as providers and women as dependent, which traps women in Botswana in cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

These three gender inequality issues have their own implications and effects not only on the victims or survivors, but also on the development of the economy at large. For example, gender-based violence violates human rights. It violates people's dignity, especially the dignity of survivors and victims, and it generally threatens the country's stability. Botswana is ranked among the worst countries globally for GBV in a non-conflict setting, and this positions our country poorly in terms of investors.

Women hold only 8.7% of parliamentary seats. This means only six women are in the Parliament of Botswana as of the 2024 general election, which leaves women demoralized due to stereotypes and lack of support. Economic inequality reduces national productivity, wastes

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human capital, and perpetuates intergenerational poverty. It is a cycle that keeps repeating itself despite several interventions that have been made. All these patterns threaten the ability of our country to achieve Sustainable Development Goal number five by 2030 if interventions or different methods or approaches are not implemented.

The key stakeholders involved in these three main gender inequality issues are women and girls. Women and girls are the primary victims of GBV and economic exclusion. Another stakeholder is youth in general. Young people inherit cycles of gender inequality because people born into systems of inequality tend to repeat these cycles across generations.

Another stakeholder is rural and low-income communities, who are mostly excluded from land, capital, and employment opportunities. This is why we chose to address these three main gender inequality issues during our time with the International Youth Council on Gender Equality as a Global Ambassador for Botswana.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Florence Zita (Ambassador, Cameroon):** Greetings. Thank you very much. Kevin, all hierarchy respected, Chairperson, fellow ambassadors. My name is Florence Zita Kev from Cameroon. I have several capacities, if I should put it that way. I have a BSc degree from the Pan-African Institute for Development in Sustainable Development in Gender, Migration, and Refugee Studies. I am also a trauma counselor from Messi Divine University in the United States.

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I am a disaster risk manager certified from UPS. I am a scrum master, and I am the Executive Director for Bind My Initiative Cameroon, a mental health association where we work to fight the stigma associated with mental health.

Let us now dive into the common goal that we have. We will be looking at five gender issues. Firstly, we have gender-based violence, GBV, where we will not expound a lot on it. We will also be talking about hate speech and early marriages, because Cameroon is made up of ten regions, and when we look at these issues, everyone is affected.

The second gender issue we will be looking at is the exclusion of women and youth from decision-making. From the report from Stand Up for Cameroon from last year, you will discover that women are left out in decision-making because their needs are not considered. Decision-making processes often consider only men.

We will also talk about menstrual hygiene. We will also look at the high level of unemployment, because that is a real problem that we are facing in the country. Youth may have skills, they may be educated, but they do not have employment. Lastly, we will be looking at limited mental health. We can all agree that no matter how productive you might be, if your mental health is disturbed or shattered, it directly affects your productivity.

Looking at the background causes of these issues, they are deeply rooted in Cameroonian communities. Social norms and traditional power structures often restrict leadership opportunities for women and youth, leaving them excluded in most cases. Economic hardship and weak institutional systems reduce access to education, employment, and health services. Stigma around reproductive health and mental well-being prevents open discussion, meaning that many people are affected but cannot open up because they fear being judged. Most of the time,

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these issues are attributed to African beliefs such as witchcraft. Conflict, displacement, and digital misinformation also contribute to violence and social division.

The implications within Cameroon are quite significant. Girls may miss school or drop out, survivors of violence face trauma, and economic participation is reduced. Young people struggle with unemployment and frustration. As I mentioned earlier, they may be educated, they may be graduates, but getting a job or having something that can feed their family becomes a challenge. This situation weakens social cohesion, reduces productivity, and lowers national development.

More than half of married women in Cameroon have experienced some form of intimate partner violence. This number is quite significant. I cannot give an exact value because the statistics from the Association for Combating Violence Against Women did not cover all of Cameroon when the study was conducted, but they covered a good number of regions, which is why I considered it relevant. This number reflects not only a human rights crisis, but also a public health and economic challenge that affects families, education, and national growth.

Addressing these issues requires an integrated approach that combines protection, education, economic empowerment, and mental health support. Gender equality is not only a social goal. It is essential for sustainable peace, inclusive governance, and the future of Cameroon. I chose these issues because they are interconnected. Looking at my community, Cameroon, these are the most pressing issues that we face on a daily basis.

Thank you for listening.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

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**Michael Julius Emilio (Ambassador, South Sudan):** Of the Council and fellow Global Ambassadors, good day. My name is Michael Julius Emilio Alibbe, and I am honored to serve as the Global Ambassador representing South Sudan.

During my time with the International Youth Council on Gender Equality, my preliminary investigation focuses on four interrelated gender inequality issues in South Sudan. These include barriers to economic empowerment, sexual and gender-based violence, barriers to sexual and reproductive health services, and political exclusion of women.

First, women's economic empowerment remains severely constrained. Customary land tenure systems and patriarchal norms continue to deny women secure land ownership and control over productive assets, despite the existence of inclusive land policies in South Sudan. Although women sustain most household activities, including farming, market vending, and family labor, they are often excluded from major financial decisions. This exclusion entrenches poverty, weakens household resilience, and limits women's capacity to participate meaningfully in development.

Second, sexual and gender-based violence is both widespread and normalized. Over 65% of women experience some form of violence in their lifetime, driven not only by conflict and displacement, but also by impunity and silence within communities. Sexual and gender-based violence undermines women's physical safety, mental health, and economic independence, while eroding social cohesion and prospects for sustainable peace in South Sudan.

Third, sexual and reproductive health challenges remain acute in South Sudan. Research estimates indicate 789 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. Conflict, poverty, underfunded health systems, and cultural resistance to family planning restrict women's access to life-saving

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services. These barriers disproportionately affect adolescent girls and displaced women, reinforcing cycles of early pregnancy, school dropout, and dependency.

Finally, women's political exclusion persists despite formal commitments ratified by the Government of South Sudan. For example, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict, a peace agreement signed in 2018, includes a 35% quota for women. However, implementation remains largely symbolic. South Sudanese women's participation in politics continues to be shaped by customs, traditions, and tribal culture. Previously, there were two female governors out of ten, but currently there are no female governors, and this underrepresentation extends across other levels of governance. This limits inclusive peacebuilding and the integration of gender-responsive policies.

These issues matter deeply to me, not only as a researcher, but as a South Sudanese youth who has witnessed gender inequality affecting young women in South Sudan. Women are central to community stability, yet they remain structurally excluded from power, protection, and resources. Through this research, my work will center on women, youth, displaced communities, and survivors. The aim of my research is to identify accountability gaps and develop locally grounded systems within our country.

I look forward to working with this Council to ensure that gender equality in South Sudan moves beyond commitments on paper toward meaningful change in people's lives. Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Rahma Abdirasak (Ambassador, Somalia):** Thank you for the floor, Chairperson and fellow ambassadors. It is a privilege to stand with you as we share solutions for gender equality. My

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name is Rahma Abdak, and I am honored to represent Somalia as a Global Ambassador at the International Youth Council on Gender Equality.

The primary gender inequality issues I will focus on during my term as ambassador are limited access to education for girls and the underrepresentation of women and marginalized groups in decision-making processes. These issues are deeply interconnected, and they continue to shape women's social, economic, and political exclusion in Somalia. These challenges are rooted in decades of conflict.

Governance structures were weakened and prolonged collapse occurred in public institutions following the state dissolution in 1991. Cultural practices such as early marriage, gender-based social expectations, and the prioritization of boys' education have further widened inequality, particularly for girls in rural areas and displaced communities. As a result, girls who are denied education face limited life opportunities, increased vulnerability to early marriage, and economic dependency.

Politically, women's exclusion from decision-making weakens democratic development, slows progress, and undermines peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict societies like Somalia. Those most affected include young women, internally displaced persons, minority clans, and rural communities. At the same time, the nation as a whole bears the cost through the loss of human capital and reduced social cohesion.

As a Somali woman, law candidate, and youth advocate, I have witnessed how education and representation not only transform individual lives but also empower communities. I am motivated by the belief that inclusive governance and equal access to education are not optional.

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They are essential for Somalia's stability and future. Gender equality, therefore, is not a future goal for Somalia.

It is a present necessity. Throughout my work with my national team, I aim to center community voices, strengthen youth participation, and advocate for evidence-based and culturally responsive solutions. I look forward to contributing to our collective vision for gender equality. Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Sofia Trotti (Ambassador, Belgium):** Thank you for the floor, Chairperson and fellow ambassadors. My name is Sofia Trotti, and I am representing Belgium as a Global Ambassador. Belgium is often regarded as a very progressive country on gender equality because it is supported by strong legal frameworks, EU-level alignment, and a very active civil society. However, beneath this reputation, persistent and intersecting forms of gender inequality continue to shape the reality of many women and young people.

In my work as a Global Ambassador, I intend to focus on three main interconnected issues. First is the intersection between economic inequalities and women's representation in leadership, where access to decision-making spaces remains shaped by class precarity and unpaid care responsibilities. The causes of these issues are deeply structural. Economic inequality restricts who can afford to participate in leadership, often excluding young people, migrant women, and those with care responsibilities. The implications are severe. When leadership spaces are dominated by economically privileged groups, policymaking risks overlooking poverty, migration, and precarity.

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One key statistic illustrates this clearly: while Belgium has made progress on gender parity, women remain overrepresented in part-time and low-paid work, which directly limits access to leadership and decision-making roles.

The second issue I will focus on is gender-based violence, particularly sexual and online violence, which remains widespread despite Belgium's commitments under the Istanbul Convention. Gender-based violence is rooted in persistent power imbalances and social norms that normalize harassment and shift responsibility onto survivors. Gender-based violence further undermines safety, trust in institutions, and democratic participation, disproportionately affecting young and migrant women.

The third issue is the role of youth education and gender norms, with a specific focus on the limited and uneven implementation of comprehensive sexuality education across different Belgian regions. Gender stereotypes are still reinforced from a very early age through education systems that inconsistently address consent, equality, and critical thinking, particularly in digital environments.

This work matters to me personally as a young woman working in gender equality in Belgium. I have seen how opportunities, safety, and voices are unevenly distributed, even in spaces that claim to be inclusive. I believe that addressing these issues requires collaboration with key stakeholders, including youth-led feminist movements, survivor-centered organizations, national institutions, and EU-level actors based in Belgium. By centering youth perspectives, lived experiences, and intersectional analysis, my team aims to contribute to solutions that move beyond formal equality and address the structural barriers that continue to shape gender inequality in Belgium.

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Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Stela Feliciano (Ambassador, Mozambique):** Honorable Chairperson, distinguished fellow ambassadors, my name is Stela Feliciano, and I have the honor of representing Mozambique. Today, I wish to address the issue of gender inequality, a challenge that continues to affect millions of women and girls in my country and limits our national development.

The key gender inequality issues Mozambique faces include early marriage, limited access to education for girls, economic inequality, and gender-based violence. While Mozambique has made progress in legal frameworks and political representation, deep inequalities persist, particularly in rural areas and low-income communities. The root causes of these issues include poverty, entrenched cultural norms, and limited access to basic services.

Many families struggle economically and prioritize boys' education over girls'. Traditional gender roles often define women primarily as wives and caregivers, restricting opportunities for education, employment, and leadership. The effects of gender inequality are profound in Mozambique. Girls who marry early are more likely to drop out of school, experience early pregnancy, and face serious health risks. Women's economic dependence increases vulnerability to violence and limits their ability to contribute to the economy.

As a result, gender inequality not only harms women and girls but also slows national progress and deepens cycles of poverty. The groups most affected in Mozambique include rural women, adolescent girls, and women working in informal and agricultural sectors who often lack legal protection, financial security, and a voice in decision-making.

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Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Madelavina Melhan (Ambassador, Indonesia):** Greetings, everyone. My name is Madelavina Melhan, and I am the Global Ambassador for Indonesia. I would like to thank everyone here for giving me the opportunity to present my preliminary report on gender equality issues in Indonesia. Despite existing laws, sexual violence and forced marriage remain two of the most prominent gender issues in Indonesia.

During my research, I found that one in four women in Indonesia has experienced sexual or physical violence. Among the 11,850 crimes reported by the Indonesian police department, more than half are categorized as sexual abuse cases. It is important to note that these numbers reflect only reported cases. Surveys conducted by various institutions in Indonesia indicate that only 32% of Indonesians are willing to report sexual violence, meaning the actual scale is likely far greater than what is recorded.

As mentioned earlier, the number of sexual violence cases appears to be rising rather than declining over the years. In 2018, reported cases reached over 260,000, increasing by 20,000 in 2019. The most recent data from the National Commission on Anti-Violence Against Women depicts the number reaching approximately 320,000 cases in 2022. These figures come as a major disappointment to the general public, as during the pandemic the number declined to 215,000 cases, only for the number of victims to rise sharply in the following years.

Public attitudes toward sexual violence significantly contribute to this issue in Indonesia. Nearly 70% of the population believes that sexual violence is caused by women's clothing and assumes

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it occurs only among adults. In reality, reports from the same institutions indicate that 72% of victims are girls aged six to eighteen, and 79% were found to be wearing long or baggy clothing. This belief normalizes victim-blaming and discourages survivors, especially children, from seeking justice.

Another major factor is the lack of sexual and reproductive health education. A study conducted across eleven regions in Indonesia, involving students from elementary to high school, showed that fewer than 30% of students understand their reproductive health rights, with only 12% understanding puberty and just 8.5% understanding basic reproductive functions. School curricula are heavily restricted by law. Indonesia's Law Number 12 of 2002 bans institutions from displaying or describing contraceptive tools, carrying penalties of up to two years in prison. As a result, teachers are reluctant to address topics related to sexual safety, let alone contraception, leaving young people without accurate information or protection.

This lack of institutional support, combined with public perceptions that discussions of intimacy are shameful, exposes children to harmful online content as their first source of information. A report by the Indonesian Judicial Justice system stated that 81.6% of elementary school students have been exposed to pornography, nearly half of which is categorized as hardcore material, and 98% of adolescents report having viewed explicit content. When pornography becomes the primary source of sexual knowledge in the absence of formal education, it often presents consent, power dynamics, and gender relations in ways that blur boundaries between fantasy and acceptable behavior, further fueling sexual violence and its normalization.

Additionally, less than half of Indonesians are willing to report sexual violence, and communities often resort to what they call "peaceful settlements" between victims and perpetrators through

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forced marriage. This practice is especially common in rural areas. The Indonesian Judicial Research Society found that 26% of sexual violence cases are resolved through such settlements, while only 19.2% lead to imprisonment and 57% remain unresolved.

Alarmingly, one in two victims is a minor. This so-called solution not only punishes victims by deepening trauma, enabling further abuse, and creating lifelong dependency, but there have also been cases where sexual violence is intentionally committed in order to force marriage. Forced marriage itself is recognized as a human rights violation by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. These practices have contributed to pregnancy-related complications becoming the second leading cause of child mortality in Indonesia.

This research concludes that without meaningful, early, and culturally accepted education supported by youth advocacy, sexual violence and forced marriage will continue to be normalized rather than prevented or reduced. However, I believe that within this report, youth have the ability to enact change and disrupt this cycle. This research proposes shifting the focus from punitive control to preventive education by reframing how sexual and personal safety are taught in Indonesia.

Rather than positioning sex education as a discussion of sexual activity, which often faces strong cultural resistance, this paper recommends adopting education on self-care as an entry point to introducing age-appropriate lessons on bodily autonomy, consent, personal boundaries, and safety. This reframing allows institutions to address sexual safety without directly confronting social taboos surrounding intimacy, making implementation more acceptable to parents, schools, and local communities.

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When introduced early and consistently, such education can function as a protective framework that equips children to recognize harmful behavior, know when and where to seek help, and critically assess information encountered online. By strengthening institutional support and restoring schools as a primary source of accurate knowledge, this approach can reduce reliance on harmful online sources and directly target the conditions that enable sexual violence and the normalization of forced marriage.

I look forward to further discussing this topic with my team and exploring additional solutions to address this ongoing issue. I also look forward to hearing everyone's thoughts in this Council. Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Maria Faria (Ambassador, Portugal):** Chairperson, fellow ambassadors, it is a privilege to be here sharing the floor with such inspiring young people from across the globe. My name is Maria Faria, and I am the Global Ambassador for Portugal.

Today, I will highlight two priority areas that the Portuguese team will focus on during this term: gender inequality in health, specifically obstetric violence, and unequal access to political power.

Regarding health, according to the Gender Equality Index 2024, Portugal's weakest-performing domain is health—particularly the dimension of access. This is understood not only as the availability of care, but as care that guarantees dignity, autonomy, informed consent, and non-discrimination.

Within this context, obstetric violence is a structural form of gender-based violence. It can include medical interventions without informed consent, verbal abuse, humiliation, or the denial

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of women's autonomy during childbirth. Its causes are systemic, including under-resourced maternity services, workload and staffing pressures, hierarchical clinical cultures, and persistent sexist norms that continue to shape how women are treated, especially during pregnancy and birth.

These harms are not evenly distributed. Race, migration status, and socioeconomic position increase vulnerability to mistreatment. One statistic that underlines the urgency of this issue is an EU-level study which found that in Portugal, 62% of participants reported a lack of consent for the use of instruments during childbirth, and nearly one-third reported not being treated with dignity. This points to a pattern with serious implications for trust in healthcare and for women's rights.

The second domain is unequal access to political power. While Portugal has made progress through parity rules, women still face party gatekeeping, leadership stereotypes, unequal access to networks and resources, and growing concerns around harassment and violence targeting women in politics. These barriers are even stronger for women facing intersectional discrimination.

For these reasons, our work will focus on implementation gaps, intersectional evidence-building, and youth-led accountability, with particular emphasis on unequal access and the disproportionate harms experienced by racialized women, both in maternity care and in pathways to political participation and leadership.

Our main goal is to help ensure that legal progress becomes measurable and enforceable change for those most exposed to exclusion and mistreatment. Thank you.

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*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Salma Abdul-Wahid (Ambassador, United Kingdom):** Chairperson and fellow ambassadors, it is wonderful to be here with you all today. Listening to your reports so far has been very insightful, and I thank you for that.

My name is Salma, and I am the Ambassador representing the United Kingdom. The UK national team and I will be focusing on two key areas where gender inequality continues to have a deep and lasting impact. The first is gender-based abuse, and the second is gender-based health inequality.

I chose these issues because they are often overlooked and underappreciated, yet the consequences of failure in care and protection are among the most serious and far-reaching in the country.

Beginning with gender-based abuse, we will focus in particular on honour-based abuse, including honour killings and domestic violence. Many people do not realize that honour-based abuse remains a significant issue in the UK. Police forces record over 2,000 cases every year, and we know the real number is likely much higher, as many victims feel unable to come forward.

This issue matters because it exposes a clash between cultural expectations, gender norms, and failures within state institutions to respond effectively. We will also examine men's experiences within this system—experiences that often go unsupported and unheard. This side of the conversation is missing far too often.

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The second focus area is gender-based health inequality. There is a common assumption that because the UK has the National Health Service, gender inequality in healthcare must be minimal. However, closer examination reveals a very different reality. Women are more likely to have their symptoms dismissed, to wait longer for diagnoses, and to be misdiagnosed. These patterns are not accidental. They stem from decades of systemic inefficiencies and the historical neglect of women's health research.

At the same time, men face distinct challenges. They are less likely to seek help for mental health concerns and experience higher mortality rates for preventable illnesses. While these experiences differ, the inequality itself is shared.

In my preliminary report, women appear to be the primary group impacted by these issues. However, I treat this as a starting point. It is essential to build a more balanced and inclusive account of how gender shapes people's experiences of both safety and healthcare. My team and I will ensure that the experiences of both men and women are represented in this work.

In conclusion, these inequalities are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing. As reflected in many of your reports, these issues do not exist in isolation. When people are not protected from abuse or when their gendered healthcare needs are unmet, the same inequalities continue to be reproduced.

My hope is that this work will open space for fresh, honest, and nuanced conversations, and ultimately contribute to meaningful change. Thank you all for listening. I look forward to learning from your perspectives and working together throughout this council.

Thank you.

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*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Jada Kufuor (Ambassador, Denmark):** Fellow ambassadors, my name is Jada Kufuor, and I represent Denmark. My address focuses on three interrelated gender inequality issues in Denmark: gender pay inequity, unequal parental authority following separation, and gender-based and domestic violence. While these issues are often examined separately, my investigation indicates that they are structurally connected and mutually reinforcing.

First, gender pay inequity remains a persistent challenge in Denmark. Despite long-standing equal pay legislation, women in Denmark earn on average approximately 14% less than men. This gap results from occupational segregation, where female-dominated professions such as care and education are undervalued, as well as from the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic labour. These dynamics continue to limit women's economic security and career progression.

Second, parental authority and custody practices contribute directly to labour market inequalities. Although Danish law formally allows for shared parental responsibility, administrative practices and cultural norms frequently position mothers as the default primary caregivers, while fathers are relegated to secondary roles following separation. Civil society organisations, such as the Association of Fathers, have documented how these practices restrict fathers' ability to engage in everyday caregiving. This reinforces gendered caregiving expectations, increases the motherhood penalty, and sustains economic inequality between parents.

Third, gender-based and domestic violence remains a significant concern. An EU-wide survey found that over half of women in Denmark have experienced physical, psychological, or sexual violence, most often perpetrated by a close partner. The consequences extend far beyond immediate harm, affecting long-term health, employment, and social participation. Children

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exposed to such violence also face increased risks of psychological and developmental challenges, contributing to the intergenerational perpetuation of inequality.

Across all these areas, intersectionality is critical. Gender inequality in Denmark does not affect all groups equally. Ethnic minority women, LGBTQ+ individuals, migrants, and those in lower socioeconomic positions experience compounded disadvantages, including lower wages, higher exposure to violence, and reduced access to institutional support and protection. In a multicultural society like Denmark, current gender equality strategies often fail to address these overlapping factors, risking the reproduction of exclusion.

Addressing gender inequality in Denmark therefore requires an intersectional approach and recognition that legal equality alone is insufficient without structural and institutional reform that reflects the lived realities of diverse populations.

Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Daly McCartney (Ambassador, Bahamas):** Hi everyone. It's wonderful to be with you all here today, and it has been wonderful to hear all of your speeches. Honourable Chairperson, fellow ambassadors, my name is Daly McCartney, and I am honoured to serve as the Global Ambassador for the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Today, I will address the three gender inequality issues outlined in my preliminary report that particularly shape the lived realities of women and minorities. These three pressing issues are constitutional and legal barriers to equality, gendered economic stratification, and gender-based violence alongside limited access to justice.

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To begin, constitutional inequality remains a foundational barrier. In my analysis, I highlighted that while the Bahamas promotes democratic values, its Constitution does not explicitly prohibit discrimination, especially on the basis of sex. This gap was made visible during the 2016 national referendum, where four proposed amendments aimed at advancing gender equality were presented to voters, and all four were rejected. Most notably, nearly 79% of voters opposed the amendment that would have formally banned sex-based discrimination.

The implications of these rejections are profound. Constitutional protections for gender equality remain vulnerable to political resistance and inconsistent implementation across citizenship rights and family law. As a result, women and other minorities continue to face legal uncertainty, particularly within institutional power structures.

Secondly, economic inequality persists through gendered labour stratification. Bahamian women have high levels of educational attainment and workforce participation, yet they remain concentrated in low-wage and informal sectors, including tourism, retail, domestic work, and caregiving. These sectors often lack job security, benefits, and legal protections. At the same time, women hold only about 18% of seats in the Bahamian House of Assembly, despite comprising nearly half of the electorate. This imbalance limits women's influence over economic and labour policy and reinforces cycles of inequality.

This impact is especially severe for woman-headed households in the Bahamas, young women, and residents of the smaller islands, commonly referred to as the Family Islands. These communities face limited employment opportunities and uneven access to financial services. Without structural reform, economic inequality risks reproducing intergenerational poverty and dependence, particularly for women.

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Third and finally, gender-based violence and limited access to justice continue to undermine women's safety and autonomy. Although domestic violence and sexual offences legislation exists in the Bahamas, enforcement gaps, social stigma, and under-resourced survivor services weaken its effectiveness. In my research, I found that in 2022 only 38% of reported sexual offences proceeded to prosecution. This highlights the severe gap between legal frameworks and actual accountability. Survivors also face limited access to legal aid due to financial barriers. These failures not only harm individual survivors but also normalize violence and weaken public trust in the Bahamian justice system.

In my preliminary report, I proposed several solutions to address these issues. Constitutional reform is essential, including renewed efforts to explicitly prohibit sex discrimination, supported by national constitutional literacy campaigns and youth-focused civic education to build sustained public support for equality. Alongside legal reform, gender-responsive economic policies are urgently needed to address labour stratification, including stronger wage equity enforcement and the formalization of informal and care-based work. Finally, youth-led research and community engagement are critical to centring survivor perspectives and dismantling gender inequality across these areas.

I believe these efforts offer a sustainable pathway toward inclusive, accountable, and grounded gender equality reform in the Bahamas. My hope is that this work will open meaningful conversations and create tangible change so that these pressing gender inequality issues can be dismantled. I look forward to working with you all and with this Council to advance sustainable Bahamian-centred solutions for all.

Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Yassmin Hkimi (Ambassador, Tunisia):** Hello everyone. Can you hear me? Honourable Chairperson, fellow ambassadors, my name is Yassmin Hkimi, and I am the Global Ambassador for Tunisia. I have the honour of representing my country and my team today.

Our investigation report identified two critical aspects of gender inequality in Tunisia. First, the persistent rise of gender-based violence, and second, the socioeconomic marginalization of rural women in agriculture. Although these two issues may seem different, they are deeply interconnected because they expose what we call the justice gap between Tunisia's progressive laws and legislation and the lived realities of women on the ground.

Starting with gender-based violence, although it is a universal issue, understanding why violence is rising in Tunisia requires moving beyond cultural narratives. Our research instead examines the institutional vulnerabilities that render legislation and protection mechanisms ineffective. Law 58 of 2017, which aims to prevent all forms of violence against women, promises prevention, protection, punishment, and services, including shelter. However, its implementation remains extremely weak. The Ministry of Women receives one of the lowest budgets in the country, leaving the right to shelter largely theoretical. As a result, civil society organizations bear the burden of providing these services. Yet, due to the current restrictive political climate for civil society, many women are left without support.

In addition, police officers and judges are insufficiently trained on the law, which means protection orders are rarely enforced. Social stigma further discourages women from reporting violence. The consequences are severe. Nearly half of Tunisian women are expected to experience violence during their lifetime. Femicides have also risen sharply, yet the criminal

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justice system continues to treat them as isolated incidents rather than gender-motivated killings. Violence has also expanded into the digital sphere, pushing women, particularly journalists and activists, out of public spaces. Marginalized groups face even greater risks. LGBTQ+ women, migrant women, particularly sub-Saharan migrant women, and women in political opposition often cannot report abuse without risking criminalization, deportation, or state repression. This demonstrates that violence in Tunisia is not only interpersonal or domestic, but also institutional and political.

Turning to the second focus of our investigation, rural women in agriculture sustain Tunisia's food system, yet they remain economically invisible and physically endangered. In interior regions, nearly half a million women work in agriculture, yet more than 90% lack social protection due to informal employment contracts, and they earn 20 to 30% less than their male counterparts. Their daily commute often involves transportation in overcrowded open-air trucks, commonly referred to in Tunisia as "death trucks," symbolizing the lives lost in frequent accidents on the way to the fields.

Poverty and illiteracy further worsen these vulnerabilities. These conditions are rooted in historical and colonial patterns of regional neglect, where certain areas were prioritized solely for resource extraction. This neglect has been further exacerbated by climate change, as the burden of land and agricultural labour increasingly falls on women. When we speak of the feminization of agriculture, we are also speaking of the feminization of poverty. This phenomenon is not only economic, but a human and legal crisis.

As a Tunisian woman in law, I see clearly how the gap between legislation and lived reality leaves women unprotected. For this reason, my team and I aim to move beyond calls for new

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legislation. Instead, our work will focus on making existing laws and protection mechanisms enforceable for every woman in Tunisia, from urban centres to rural regions.

Thank you very much for listening.

*The record reflects that one question and one comment was stated.*

**Aziza El Azizi (Ambassador, Morocco):** Thank you, Yassmin, for this insightful report. I would like to ask a question, as I did not hear one issue mentioned regarding gender inequality in Tunisia. You did not address child marriage, and I am curious to know whether child marriage is not prevalent in Tunisia, or if there are relatively fewer cases compared to other gender inequality concerns. Thank you.

**Yassmin Hkimi (Ambassador, Tunisia):** Thank you for your question. I did not mention child marriage because, following the reforms of the Personal Status Code in Tunisia, child marriage is not legal. Marriage and consent are legally set at the age of 18. As a result, there are no incidents of child marriage in Tunisia. Thank you very much.

**Subheya Ben Khalil (Ambassador, Libya):** I feel that everyone is a bit shy to give feedback, so I just wanted to say to Yasmin that your speech was more than wonderful. I really liked how you articulated the issues using real-life examples. Well done.

*The ambassador for Libya was then called to present.*

**Subheya Ben Khalil (Ambassador, Libya):** Good afternoon, Chairperson and esteemed fellow ambassador. My name is Sabria, and I proudly represent Libya as its ambassador. I would like to begin my speech with a story of a young girl who dreamed of entering university to study political science. She carried in her heart a deep passion for change and a strong desire to be a

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voice representing women in her community. However, as she came close to achieving her dream, she discovered that the field was reserved for men. She felt as if the doors to her future had closed, and her hopes were extinguished amid exclusion and societal tradition. That girl is me.

I am not alone in this struggle. My story reflects the experience of many women in Libya. For this reason, I have chosen to highlight two main issues facing women in the country. The first is the lack of women's participation in political life. The absence of women from decision-making positions remains a significant barrier to progress. A long history of female exclusion reveals how deeply rooted stereotypes have defined politics as a predominantly male domain. This exclusion deprives society of the benefits of women's voices and leads to the neglect of their needs and priorities.

The second issue is the lack of women's participation in the labour market. Libyan women face a shortage of suitable employment opportunities, as many jobs are considered exclusive to men. This situation fosters a negative work culture and imposes constraints on women's aspirations. As a result, women's talents and creativity are wasted, negatively impacting the country's economic growth.

Today, I stand before you embodying the aspirations of many women in Libya, fully aware that achieving change requires collective effort. Hope remains alive, and change is possible if we work together to break down barriers and achieve equality. I would like to add one final note: I do not believe in the language of statistics. I believe in lived reality.

Thank you all for listening.

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*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Hindolo Jaia (Ambassador, Sierra Leone):** Greetings everyone. My name is Hindolo Jaia, and I am a country ambassador for the IYCGE. I am presenting today not only as a researcher, but also as someone witnessing significant changes within the legislative sector of our country. I am proud to say that we have made meaningful progress in combating gender inequality. However, there remains a major gap between traditional practices and the implementation of current legislative laws.

For the purpose of this presentation, I will focus on two key issues. The first is child marriage. It is deeply concerning that although the prohibition of child marriage was passed last year, approximately 30% of girls are still married under the age of 18. This is not due to the absence of laws, but because these laws are not effectively implemented in rural communities. Child marriage stems from both social and economic factors. Socially, many rural communities believe that early marriage prevents premarital pregnancy, leading families to marry off young girls. Economically, many families cannot afford to support their children. In some communities, parents have ten or eleven children, and with the high cost of living, they see marriage as a way for their daughters to be financially sustained.

The second issue is economic exclusion, which is closely interconnected with child marriage. Because women lack access to economic opportunities, they struggle to sustain their families, which in turn drives child marriage. It is alarming that 96% of women are employed in the informal sector. This is not due to a lack of capability, but rather limited opportunities. Although the Gender Act of 2022 provides for 30% representation of women in political and private sectors, women remain concentrated in informal work. This is largely due to laws and practices

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that prevent women from owning land and accessing bank loans, often because they lack collateral.

In response, many women have formed community-based groups known as “mam queens,” aimed at empowering one another. However, these groups face challenges related to transparency, accountability, and adapting to an evolving economic environment.

These issues have severe consequences for the country. Out of every 100,000 births, there are approximately 354 child-related deaths linked to child marriage and limited access to economic opportunities. Women are unable to access improved healthcare services and instead rely on traditional methods, which often result in preventable deaths. These are not just statistics. These are futures being lost—people who could have contributed meaningfully to national development.

Our country does not suffer from a lack of laws, but from a failure of implementation. As a team, we aim to address this gap through community-based approaches, particularly the Palava system. This system brings together chiefs, young people, and community members to educate them about existing laws, emphasizing that national laws supersede harmful traditional practices. Our goal is to socialize the law and ensure communities understand that these protections exist for them.

It is not surprising that these issues cut across many African countries. We also face challenges related to sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence, as well as political participation. While legal frameworks exist, our focus is to ensure these laws are understood, accepted, and implemented at the community level.

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Thank you very much.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Aziza El Azizi (Ambassador, Morocco):** Hello everyone. Chairperson, fellow ambassadors, I am truly honored to speak today as the gender equality ambassador of Morocco and to present the gender equality issues we face in our country.

Before starting, I would like to mention that this report is based on my direct experience and observations from field trips to communities in Morocco, conducted in my role as a program coordinator with a nonprofit organization, as well as my work as a human rights activist with Amnesty International. It also draws on insights gained during my advocacy visits to the Moroccan Parliament in Rabat, where I engaged with policymakers to fight against child marriage and highlight the challenges and opportunities in advocating for gender equality in Morocco.

I have chosen to focus on three critical issues that reflect both progress and remaining challenges in Morocco. These are child marriage, gender-based violence, and political representation. These areas were selected because they reveal the most urgent gaps between Morocco's legal framework and the lived reality on the ground, particularly in rural areas, and because addressing them is essential for the empowerment of women and adolescent girls in Morocco.

Child marriage threatens girls' rights and futures. Gender-based violence undermines women's safety and dignity. Political underrepresentation prevents women from shaping decisions that affect their lives and limits their ability to achieve their aspirations.

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I will begin with child marriage and provide an overview of the loopholes in the Family Code, known in Morocco as the *Moudawana*. Although the legal age of marriage is set at 18 under Article 20 of the Family Code, Morocco still contains significant loopholes that undermine its protective intent. Article 20 allows judges to authorize the marriage of minors in exceptional cases, a provision that has been widely used, particularly in rural areas. In practice, these exceptions often prioritize family or social pressures over the best interests of the child, exposing girls to early marriage, interrupted education, gender-based violence, and long-term vulnerability. The existence of such legal loopholes weakens the enforcement of child protection standards and perpetuates cycles of inequality and risk for young girls across Morocco.

The implementation gap is most visible within the Family Code. Although the legal age of marriage is 18, data shows that 30% of women aged 20 to 24 were married as children in rural areas. In 2024 alone, this figure reached 21%. Moroccan courts received over 16,700 requests to authorize underage marriages, nearly 80% of which came from rural areas, and the majority were approved. These exceptions undermine the protective intent of the law and expose girls to lifelong vulnerability.

The second issue is gender-based violence in Morocco. Gender-based violence remains widespread, with national data showing that 57% of women experienced at least one form of violence in a single year. At the most extreme end of this continuum lies femicide. UN data estimates that 52 women per 100 lost their lives to femicide in Morocco.

The third issue is political representation. Women currently hold 24% of seats in Morocco's parliament. While this represents progress, women remain largely absent from positions of real political power and leadership. This underrepresentation limits women's ability to influence

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policy, advocate for their rights, and ensure that laws and programs respond to the realities faced by women and girls across Morocco.

Strengthening women's political participation is essential for advancing sustainable gender equality and inclusive development. As a gender equality ambassador and an intersectional feminist in Morocco, my team and I will continue working to end child marriage and advocate for women's and girls' rights, particularly in rural areas.

Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Saudia Pina Mango (Ambassador, Guinea-Bissau):** Good afternoon to the chairperson and fellow ambassadors. I am Saudia Pina Mango, ambassador of Guinea-Bissau. My team and I have chosen to address three priority issues of gender inequality in Guinea-Bissau.

These are the lack of access to quality education, limited access to adequate health services, and the almost non-existent representation of young girls and women in government and parliamentary seats. Gender inequality in Guinea-Bissau is structural and deeply rooted in cultural practices that, for decades, have silenced girls and women, depriving them of a voice across diverse areas of social life. This reality is reinforced by cultural and religious interpretations that argue women should not occupy certain spaces, especially public spaces and decision-making positions.

Education is a powerful tool for breaking patterns established over centuries. However, it remains inaccessible to the majority of women, particularly girls living in rural areas of the country, perpetuating cycles of exclusion and inequality. Another serious form of domination

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over girls and women manifests itself through taboos surrounding the female body. Many women are unaware of how their bodies function, which leads them to accept—or in many cases be forced to accept—practices that are harmful to their health and dignity. In this regard, it is essential to ensure access to quality health services, including in the most remote villages of Guinea.

Currently, women's agendas are primarily addressed by international organizations and civil society groups. Within the governmental sphere, there is a significant lack of female representation, both in parliament and within the government. The percentage of women in the Guinean Parliament was approximately 14% in previous years. In the most recent electoral cycle, particularly following the 2023 elections, women occupy about 9.8% of parliamentary seats, demonstrating that representation remains low.

This figure does not align with the requirements set out in the party law approved in 2018 by the National People's Assembly and promulgated by the President of the Republic at the end of the same year. That law established a minimum quota of 36% women on candidate lists for elections to the National Assembly and local bodies. The effects of this exclusion are visible in society and directly impact the type of leadership that will emerge in the near future—leadership that is often not sensitive to gender issues and that, in some cases, reinforces stereotypes that marginalize women who dare to step out of the shadows and fully exercise their freedom of expression and presence in public spaces.

As ambassadors, and on behalf of the entire national team, we agree that by working within these three key sectors of female emancipation—from adolescence through the transition into

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youth—it will be possible to achieve significant results over time and promote a change in mentality regarding female leadership.

Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Amenti D. Emiru (Ambassador, Ethiopia):** Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening, Chairperson and fellow ambassadors, wherever you are joining us from around the world. I am Amenti D. Emiru from Ethiopia, the Global Ambassador for Ethiopia, and I am honored to be part of this meeting today.

Based on my preliminary assessment of gender equality in Ethiopia, it is clear that the crisis is one of deep concern and is multidimensional. I have categorized the issues into three main areas: social, economic, and political.

From a social perspective, Ethiopia is currently facing an epidemic of gender-based violence fueled by deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes. To briefly illustrate this reality using statistics, approximately 65% of women and girls in Ethiopia have undergone female genital mutilation. Although this practice is criminalized, it continues to be fueled by cultural traditions. According to surveys conducted by the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs in 2022, this harmful practice remains widespread.

From an economic perspective, inequality has been structurally embedded in society. While women have been instrumental to agricultural progress, they own only about 12% of agricultural land in the country, as noted in the Ethiopia Gender Statistics Report. Additionally, women are disproportionately forced into the informal economy, where they receive little or no

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compensation. This gender gap has resulted in an estimated loss of approximately 3.7 billion dollars in gross domestic product, according to the World Bank Gender Diagnostic Report published in 2019. This is not merely an issue of fairness—it is a significant constraint on national development.

Politically, despite the visibility of some political appointments, women's representation remains largely superficial. Female representation has declined to as low as 7% in regional councils. Most concerning is that women in Ethiopia are often excluded from peace negotiations, even though they are among the primary targets of social violence during conflicts across the country.

The message is clear: when a significant portion of the population is silenced, impoverished, and marginalized, a nation cannot reach its full potential. This issue affects me deeply because I advocate for an Ethiopia where every girl and woman feels safe and empowered to contribute to economic, political, and social growth, and where their participation is recognized as a foundation for progress and development.

As part of the solution, my national team will engage in a youth-centered, action-oriented approach. This will include conducting surveys across the country, prioritizing survivor testimonies with a strong ethical framework, and advocating for effective legislation—focused on action, not empty promises.

I invite you all to work with us on this critical effort. Together, as a global council, we can change not only policies but also the norms that limit our countries.

Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

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**Hellenah Nagawa Luyinda (Ambassador Uganda):** Chairperson and esteemed ambassadors, I bring warm greetings from the Republic of Uganda. It is an honor to join you today in our shared commitment to confronting and dismantling the barriers of gender inequality across the globe. My name is Nagawa Helena Angela. I am a pharmacist and I serve as the Global Ambassador for Uganda.

To understand gender inequality in Uganda, it is important to recognize that for many women and girls, inequality begins long before they have the words to name it, and it follows them through every stage of life. My preliminary report focuses on five key gender inequality issues.

The first issue is limited access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights. In Uganda, a girl can become pregnant before she fully understands consent. Health facilities are often distant, under-resourced, and hostile to adolescents. Girls are denied contraception, shamed for seeking care, and frequently pushed into unsafe abortions in silence. Nearly one in four Ugandan girls becomes pregnant before the age of 16, and unsafe abortion contributes to up to 34% of maternal deaths in the country.

The second issue is gender-based violence. Violence against women and girls is normalized. Defilement is whispered about, domestic violence is resolved within the home, and marital rape is rarely acknowledged. Over 64% of Ugandan women have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, yet reporting remains dangerously low. Survivors are often asked to protect family honor instead of protecting their own lives.

The third issue is employment discrimination and workplace harassment. When women enter the workforce, particularly in the informal sector where over 79% of Ugandan women are employed, they do so without contracts, protections, or recourse. Sexual harassment becomes the price of

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survival, and silence becomes a condition for keeping a job. Reporting abuse often means choosing dignity over daily bread.

The fourth issue is economic inequality and women's poverty, which is closely tied to child and forced marriage. In Uganda, 42% of girls are married before the age of 16. Poverty turns daughters into coping mechanisms. Once married, girls drop out of school, lose economic independence, and enter cycles of unpaid labor and dependence. This is how poverty is inherited by design.

The fifth and final issue is limited access to justice for women and girls. Justice is distant, expensive, and emotionally unsafe. Less than one in ten survivors of sexual violence in Uganda ever access formal justice mechanisms. Police posts lack resources, legal processes are slow, and survivors are retraumatized by systems that prioritize evidence over empathy. Many women never report harm because justice itself feels like another risk.

This is life in Uganda. Young girls are dropping out of school due to early pregnancy. Women are enduring violence at home and at work. Every day, gender inequality steals dreams. A child is pulled from school into early marriage. A mother is denied her right to inherit land. A young woman is silenced through femicide. These are futures stolen. If we do not act, their pain becomes the legacy of a nation, and the world loses women's lives.

Together with my fellowship team, we are prepared to confront these challenges head-on. We understand the complexity of the work and the deep roots of inequality, but we are ready. This is our commitment to every girl, every woman, and every survivor in Uganda—that their stories will not fade in silence, and that their futures will not be defined by injustice, but by hope, opportunity, and equality.

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Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Lizzy Palo (Ambassador, Netherlands):** Thank you, Chairperson, and thank you to all ambassadors for the insights shared today. It has been very valuable to hear about everyone's work.

My name is Lizzy Palo, and I am the Ambassador for the Netherlands. I joined relatively recently, so my preliminary report is not yet finalized. However, I would like to briefly present the two key issues I have been researching so far.

The first issue is violence against sex workers. The Netherlands is often viewed as a positive example due to its relatively liberal laws on sex work. However, research shows that the lived experiences of sex workers remain highly negative, with a significant prevalence of violence. In a recent study examining experiences within a 12-month period, 58% of sex workers reported financial or economic violence, 60% reported physical violence, 78% reported sexual violence, and 93% reported social or emotional violence. The vast majority of participants had experienced at least one form of violence within the past year.

Several factors contribute to this increased vulnerability. Younger sex workers experience higher levels of violence than older workers. Those working in more secluded or discrete environments, such as hotels, massage parlors, or private homes, also face higher risks. Substance use is another factor associated with increased exposure to violence. At a societal level, stigma plays a significant role. Sex workers are often dehumanized and objectified, perceived as having lower social status, and consequently treated with less respect. This stigma contributes to extremely

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low reporting rates of violence. Many sex workers wish to remain anonymous, and reporting violence often removes that anonymity. Additionally, those who do report incidents frequently experience dismissive or unsupportive responses from law enforcement.

Perpetrators are often aware of this lack of institutional support. Many take advantage of the fact that sex workers are hesitant to report violence or are unlikely to be taken seriously, which further exacerbates the issue. Overall, while the Netherlands is often portrayed as a safe environment for sex work, evidence shows that violence against sex workers remains widespread and deeply entrenched.

The second issue I have been researching is femicide. Femicide refers to the killing of women because they are women. In the Netherlands, a woman is killed approximately every eight days. In the majority of cases, the perpetrator is a current or former partner. Femicide is closely linked to domestic violence, as many victims have previously experienced abuse by the same perpetrator. Even in cases where this is not documented, perpetrators are often already known to the police, frequently for stalking or domestic violence offenses involving others.

From a legal perspective, the Netherlands adopts a gender-neutral approach to homicide. Femicide is not recognized as a distinct offense and is not prosecuted differently from other forms of homicide. There are no specialized prosecutors or gender-sensitive legal frameworks, unlike in countries such as Spain, where femicide is treated through a gendered lens. I plan to further examine the implications of this approach and its effectiveness.

It is also important to recognize that femicide creates secondary victims. Children, family members, and close relatives are profoundly affected, particularly when a mother is killed by a

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partner or former partner. These broader impacts must be considered when developing policy responses and engaging stakeholders.

These are the two key issues I have identified so far. My preliminary report will be released next week. Thank you all very much for listening.

**Adam Alkazely (Executive Chairperson):** Thank you. I would like to echo the sentiments shared earlier by Kevin. As he noted, although some countries are often perceived as more progressive or economically well-off, many continue to face significant gender equality challenges. These issues are frequently intertwined with deeper structural and institutional frameworks within society. It was valuable for you to highlight that complexity. Thank you for your address.

*The record reflects that one question was raised.*

**Lana Sweidan (Fellow, Lebanon):** Yes, I have a question for Lizzy. First of all, thank you for your presentation. It was very insightful. My question relates to your first topic on sex workers. Have you considered examining the role of human trafficking within sex work and the associated abuse? In the Netherlands, there are many sex workers who have been forced into the industry, often trafficked from countries in Eastern Europe or Ukraine. There are several reports on this. I wanted to ask whether this is something you plan to include in your report.

**Lizzy Palo (Ambassador, Netherlands):** Thank you. That is a very important question, and I appreciate you raising it—especially since I am still in the early stages of my report. My current research focuses on violence against sex workers broadly, including those who may have been trafficked. However, you raise a valid point. Many of the studies I have reviewed so far primarily

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focus on sex workers who are working legally or consensually. As a result, I cannot yet provide a concrete answer on the trafficking-specific dimension.

That said, this is an important gap, and your question highlights a critical area to consider when defining the scope of my research. I will take this into account as I continue developing my report. Thank you for bringing it up.

**Sabina Malmakova (Ambassador, Kazakhstan):** Honorable Chairperson, fellow ambassadors, my name is Sabina Malmakova, and today I represent the Republic of Kazakhstan—a nation where high educational attainment among women sharply contrasts with a troubling decline in economic participation and political empowerment.

My address focuses on three critical pillars: economic inequality, political exclusion, and systemic violence. In 2025, Kazakhstan fell significantly in the Global Gender Gap Index for economic participation. There is a severe lack of women in decision-making roles, persistent domestic violence, and a deeply segregated labor market. These challenges are rooted in traditional gender norms and structural barriers.

Women are disproportionately concentrated in lower-paid care sectors such as education and healthcare, while high-income industries—including STEM, oil and gas, and construction—remain overwhelmingly male-dominated. On average, Kazakhstani women perform twice as much unpaid domestic work as men. In rural regions, conservative practices—such as rigid expectations placed on daughters-in-law—significantly limit women’s agency. A deep-seated son preference continues to undervalue girls from birth.

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The economic consequences are profound. Women earn approximately 30% less than men for similar work. In industrial regions such as Mangystau, this gap reaches as high as 86%. Beyond economics, the lack of female representation in the executive branch and local government means that critical issues—such as reproductive rights and public safety—are often sidelined in national policymaking and budget allocation.

I have seen the glass ceiling in my country begin to crack, but it has not yet been broken. Thank you for your time.

**Adam Alkazely (Executive Chairperson):** Thank you, Representative. I especially appreciated how you highlighted the way these issues are intertwined with traditional norms—how they are often swept under the rug or fragmented into separate categories rather than addressed as systemic issues in their own right. I really enjoyed your address.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Marwa Madi (Ambassador, Afghanistan):** Greetings, honorable chairpersons, fellow ambassadors, and everyone present. Thank you for giving me the floor.

My name is Marwa Madi, and I am honored to serve as the ambassador of Afghanistan. I am here not only as a representative of my country, but as a girl who was only 16 years old when her most basic right—the right to education—was taken away.

Today, I stand to represent an injustice that once silenced my voice, and to be a voice for the millions of Afghan girls who face some of the harshest forms of gender inequality in the world. The key issue I wish to address is the systemic exclusion of girls from education, particularly since August 2021.

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Education is a fundamental human right, yet millions of Afghan girls have been banned from attending school. What we are witnessing is not merely the closure of classrooms—it is the closure of dreams, opportunities, and the future of an entire generation. The causes of this exclusion are rooted in restrictive government policies, insecurity, and economic hardship. These decisions are often justified through cultural or religious narratives; however, many respected Afghan scholars and community leaders reject this interpretation and affirm that education is a right for both women and men.

The consequences of these policies are devastating. According to UNESCO, approximately 2.2 million Afghan girls are currently denied access to secondary education, representing nearly 80% of school-aged girls. This is not just a statistic—it is an entire generation being left behind. Beyond education, this exclusion forces many girls into early and forced marriages, limits their access to healthcare, and eliminates economic opportunities. Communities lose future doctors, teachers, and leaders, and Afghanistan loses the potential of half its population to shape a better future.

This issue is deeply personal to me. I know what it feels like to have your future taken away. I know the fear, and I know the silence. But I also know the power of resilience, the power of resistance, and the power of taking action.

In response, I founded a nonprofit organization to support Afghan girls through online education. I have witnessed girls who refuse to give up—who continue learning, teaching, and leading despite immense barriers. They remind us that change is possible, even under the most difficult circumstances.

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I look forward to working with this council to promote gender equality in my country and to make a positive impact in my community. Thank you very much.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Yasmine Karout (Ambassador, Palestine):** Chairperson, fellow ambassadors, good afternoon or good morning, depending on where you are joining us from.

My name is Yasmine Karout, and I am the global ambassador for Palestine. Today, I would like to briefly present the focus of my preliminary report on gender inequality in Palestine, which will guide the work my fellows and I intend to undertake during our term.

This report approaches gender inequality not as an isolated social issue, but as a structural condition shaped by political, economic, and humanitarian realities. It centers on three interconnected areas: women's economic participation and economic security; gender-based violence and access to protection and justice; and the structural impacts of prolonged occupation and political fragmentation on women and girls.

In Palestine, gender inequality cannot be understood outside of its broader context. Prolonged occupation, movement restrictions, territorial fragmentation, and recurring humanitarian crises have deeply constrained labor markets, public services, and institutional capacity. Within this environment, women face overlapping barriers, including restricted mobility, high unemployment, limited access to childcare, and a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work. These challenges are further reinforced by persistent social norms that limit women's economic and public participation.

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The first issue addressed in the report is women's economic participation. Despite high levels of educational attainment, women's labor force participation remains extremely low due to structural barriers rather than lack of capacity. Many women are excluded from formal employment or pushed into informal and insecure work, undermining long-term economic security and household resilience.

The second issue is gender-based violence and access to protection and justice. Economic stress, displacement, and service disruption increase the risk of violence while simultaneously weakening access to survivor-centered support and legal remedies. Fragmented legal systems and limited service coverage create additional barriers, particularly for women living in highly restricted areas.

The third issue examines how prolonged occupation and political fragmentation intensify gender inequality by limiting access to education, healthcare, employment, and protection services, while producing uneven impacts across different groups of women and girls.

The implications of these intersecting issues are severe. Low female labor force participation increases household vulnerability to poverty, while heightened exposure to violence and limited access to justice undermine women's safety and well-being. Young women, women-headed households, women with disabilities, and women living in highly restricted areas are particularly affected. One statistic that underscores this reality is that female labor force participation in the West Bank and Gaza combined remains below 20%, compared to male participation rates exceeding 65%. This gap reflects deep structural barriers rather than a lack of ambition or ability.

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Through this project, my fellows and I aim to ground our work in both scholarly research and community-based strategies, amplifying local voices and developing practical, context-sensitive approaches to advancing gender equality in Palestine.

Thank you very much.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Aizirek Erkebaeva (Ambassador, Kyrgyzstan):** Hello, chairpersons and fellow ambassadors.

My name is Aizirek Erkebaeva. I am a lawyer, researcher, and feminist activist from Central Asia, specifically from Kyrgyzstan. It is a great honor to represent the national team of Kyrgyzstan as a global ambassador. Together with our national team, I would like to present three key gender inequality issues that we will be working on during our term.

For context, Kyrgyzstan is a country where gender-based violence is formally recognized under criminal law, and law enforcement bodies are positioned as the primary institutional response. This approach, however, is shaped by the legacy of the Soviet colonial regime, which prioritized punitive control as the main path to justice. While police intervention remains socially legitimate and is often the only accessible mechanism for survivors of gender-based violence, this system contains deep contradictions. Violence within the family is frequently framed as a private matter, while survivors are still expected to rely on institutions that often fail to provide consistent or long-term, survivor-centered protection.

The first issue we address is the role and limitations of law enforcement bodies in responding to gender-based violence. Civil society organizations and crisis centers in Kyrgyzstan have documented practices such as the refusal to register complaints, pressure on survivors to

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reconcile, and failure to enforce protection orders. While police involvement can offer temporary legal recognition, overreliance on punitive responses fails to address survivors' long-term safety, autonomy, and material needs. These limitations disproportionately affect systematically marginalized women, particularly women from rural areas, women with limited financial independence, and incarcerated women.

The second issue concerns the normalization and depoliticization of femicide in criminal proceedings in Kyrgyzstan. Femicide is often treated as ordinary homicide, without adequate attention to gendered motives or systemic patterns of violence. This misrecognition undermines accountability, perpetuates cycles of violence, and restricts the development of meaningful prevention strategies. Our work will examine how the failure to recognize femicide as a gender-based crime results in legal and policy responses that remain largely symbolic.

The third issue focuses on image-based sexual abuse, a form of harm that is not yet widely recognized in Kyrgyzstan, either legally or in policy discussions. Its absence from the legal framework should not be mistaken for safety. Weak digital regulation, entrenched gender norms, and emerging image manipulation technologies create conditions in which sexualized digital harm can escalate quietly. The most significant impact of this gap is legal invisibility. When harm is not explicitly recognized, it is rarely prevented. This is particularly dangerous for young women and girls.

These issues represent only a portion of the gender-based harms currently occurring in Kyrgyzstan. However, each opens critical discussions at both the national and global levels. These issues matter because many institutions in our country—built within colonial and capitalist regimes—continue to play a decisive role in determining which harms are recognized and which

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are dismissed. Working with our national team, we aim to explore survivor-centered, decolonial, and non-carceral approaches, while actively engaging young people and young activists as contributors to our research.

Thank you very much for your attention.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Lana Sweidan (Fellow, Lebanon):** Good afternoon, Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, and distinguished ambassadors.

My name is Lana Sweidan, and I am speaking today as a fellow on behalf of the Lebanese delegation. Thank you for the opportunity to present our preliminary areas of focus.

Our national team examines gender inequality in Lebanon as a structural issue shaped by legal, economic, and political systems, rather than by individual circumstances. The preliminary report outlines three interconnected areas of focus that together reinforce women's exclusion and vulnerability.

The first area concerns intersectional discrimination against refugee women, particularly in access to healthcare, education, and employment. Lebanon hosts one of the highest numbers of refugees per capita, yet it lacks a comprehensive, rights-based refugee protection framework. As a result, refugee women experience compounded barriers linked to gender, legal status, nationality, and financial capacity. Limited legal residency restricts mobility and access to essential services, while economic precarity and social stigma further deter access to healthcare and participation in education or formal employment. These exclusions function as a reinforcing system, producing long-term gendered vulnerability rather than temporary hardship.

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The second area of focus examines discriminatory legal frameworks and gaps in women's rights protection and representation. In Lebanon, personal status laws governing marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance are administered through sectarian religious courts, resulting in unequal legal treatment of women across communities. In addition, Lebanese women are unable to pass nationality to their children or spouses, reinforcing legal dependency. While laws addressing gender-based violence exist, enforcement remains inconsistent, and significant gaps persist regarding marital rape, economic violence, and survivor-centered protections. These legal inequalities are compounded by women's severe underrepresentation in political and public decision-making, limiting their ability to influence reform agendas.

The third area of focus addresses economic instability and women's low labor force participation. Despite high levels of female educational attainment, women in Lebanon remain largely excluded from formal and secure employment. This is driven by labor market discrimination, weak legal protections, insufficient childcare and social support systems, and the heavy burden of unpaid care work—burdens that have intensified amid Lebanon's ongoing economic collapse. Women are often the first to exit the labor market during periods of crisis, deepening dependency and economic insecurity.

Importantly, these three issues are deeply interconnected. Legal discrimination limits women's protection and political voice, economic exclusion reduces autonomy and access to services, and refugee women face all of these barriers simultaneously. Together, these dynamics create a cycle in which gender inequality is normalized and reproduced across generations.

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Our work will emphasize youth-led, community-driven, and rights-based approaches to challenge these structures, translating research into advocacy on legal reform, inclusive healthcare access, gender-based violence protection, and women's economic participation.

Thank you for your attention.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Labiod Amira Soror (Ambassador, Algeria):** Thank you for giving me the floor. Dear fellows and Chairperson of the Council, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share my preliminary reflections.

I believe this work requires a strong and focused commitment to advancing gender equality in Algeria. Drawing on my professional and civil society experience, I would like to provide an overview of how gender equality issues currently manifest in the Algerian context.

In Algeria, gender equality has seen significant progress at the legal level, particularly in education and access to basic rights. However, the gap between legislation and lived realities remains substantial. Women's participation in the labor market is still among the lowest in the region—specifically in Southwest Asia and North Africa. Despite the fact that young women are increasingly educated and skilled, this disconnect highlights that gender inequality in Algeria is not only a social issue, but also a critical economic and development challenge.

One of the main areas I intend to focus on is women's economic empowerment, particularly for young women. Structural barriers such as limited access to finance, the widespread prevalence of informal work, and persistent gender bias in entrepreneurship and employment continue to restrict women's economic autonomy and financial independence. Through my work, I am

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interested in promoting gender-responsive entrepreneurship, supporting women-led initiatives and organizations, and ensuring that economic transition programs are designed to include women as active economic actors.

A second key area of focus is the intersection between gender equality and climate change, as well as climate justice more broadly. Algeria is increasingly affected by climate-related challenges such as water scarcity, heat waves, and waste management issues. These impacts are not gender-neutral. Women, particularly at the community level, are often more exposed to environmental stress while remaining underrepresented in climate decision-making spaces. Strengthening women's leadership in climate action, supporting youth-led feminist environmental initiatives, and integrating care, resilience, and mental well-being into climate responses are essential components of the work I will be undertaking with the Council.

Overall, I believe that effective gender equality work in Algeria must be intersectional and transformative. This preliminary reflection will serve as the foundation for a more structured report, including clear priorities and indicators.

Thank you very much for giving me the floor.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Fawzi Ahmed (Ambassador, Sudan):** Good afternoon, good morning to the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, and everyone present.

My name is Fawzi Ahmed from Sudan. I am a governance expert, peace researcher, and human rights activist. Today, I would like to present the key gender inequality issues that our work intends to address in Sudan.

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The primary issues we seek to focus on are women's limited participation in politics and education, as well as gender-based violence and harmful practices against women. Gender inequality in Sudan is deeply rooted and structural, shaped by colonial legacies, economic austerity, weak governance, prolonged armed conflict, economic marginalization, and restrictive social norms.

Prolonged armed conflict has significantly intensified gender inequality across Sudan. Decades of war, compounded by the current conflict, have resulted in massive displacement, the collapse of livelihoods, and widespread insecurity. These conditions have severely exacerbated gender inequality. Economic marginalization has further deepened these disparities, particularly as the ongoing economic collapse and unemployment have reduced women's participation in politics and public service. Many households have been pushed into poverty, disproportionately affecting women, especially those living in conflict zones.

Social norms continue to restrict women's autonomy and participation in public life in many communities. Traditional expectations prioritize women's roles within the household while limiting their access to education, employment, and leadership opportunities.

The implications of these issues in Sudan are far-reaching and extend beyond individual women to affect families, communities, state legitimacy, and prospects for peace and development. According to UN Women, the impact of gender inequality in Sudan is multidimensional—social, political, economic, and psychological—and is especially severe for marginalized groups, including internally displaced women, ethnic minorities, rural populations, and women with disabilities. These groups currently face extreme vulnerability given the ongoing situation in Sudan.

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At the societal level, persistent gender inequality reinforces cycles of poverty, illiteracy, and dependency. Women's exclusion from education and formal employment limits household resilience and undermines national human capital development.

The groups most affected in Sudan include women and girls—particularly those in conflict-affected and rural areas—young women, female community leaders, internally displaced persons, refugees living in camps, and marginalized ethnic groups such as those in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile, and eastern Sudan.

Gender inequality matters deeply in Sudan because women and girls continue to face systematic discrimination in political participation, education, economic opportunities, and access to justice. Prolonged conflict, displacement, and weak governance structures have intensified gender-based violence, early marriage, and women's exclusion from decision-making processes. This inequality not only violates fundamental human rights but also undermines sustainable peace, social cohesion, and national development. Evidence consistently shows that inclusive societies—where women meaningfully participate in governance and peace processes—are more stable and resilient.

From a personal perspective, my work in peacebuilding and transitional justice has shown me how deeply conflict and political instability affect women and marginalized communities. Through organizing dialogue, supporting women-led initiatives, and advocating for gender-sensitive transitional justice frameworks, I have witnessed both the immense challenges women face and their critical role as agents of change.

This experience motivates my commitment to advancing gender equality as a foundation for peace, justice, and inclusive governance in Sudan. Finally, according to UNICEF and UNFPA,

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approximately 86% of Sudanese women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone female genital mutilation.

Thank you.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Nagla Abbas (Ambassador, Zanzibar & Tanzania):** Good afternoon, Chairperson, fellow ambassadors, and colleagues present. My apologies, I am unable to turn on my video due to network issues. I am the global ambassador for Zanzibar and Tanzania. Today, I would like to present the key issues our national team will focus on, which are gender inequality in access to justice and legal aid, and inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

These two topics are closely interrelated, especially in the context of Zanzibar and Tanzania. While Zanzibar is part of Tanzania, it functions with its own president and governance structures, which sometimes interact with the national system. Therefore, our research will focus on the interconnected realities of both Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania.

The first issue, gender inequality in access to justice, is recognized in the constitutions of both Zanzibar and the United Republic of Tanzania. The 1977 Constitution of Tanzania guarantees equality and non-discrimination, and Article 106 of the Zanzibar Constitution similarly guarantees equal protection. However, in practice, access is limited. On the ground, I have delivered legal aid services and observed firsthand that women often cannot access justice. Legal services are largely unavailable for personal cases, and until 2023, few programs existed to

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support women in navigating the legal system. Recently, the President initiated the “Mama Samia Legal Aid Campaign” to raise awareness and help citizens understand their rights.

According to UN Women (2024), access barriers are particularly severe in Zanzibar, where 61% of the population lives in rural areas with limited legal services. Women face compounded challenges due to financial constraints, lack of legal awareness, and a plural legal system combining customary, religious, and statutory law. For example, Zanzibar has the Kad’s Office which integrates with formal law, whereas mainland Tanzania does not operate under religious law. The Legal and Human Rights Center (2024) reports that over 70% of gender-based violence cases in Zanzibar are resolved informally through family or community mediation rather than formal courts.

The second issue is inequality in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Adolescents and women often face restricted access to health services due to social norms, stigma, and fear of disclosure. For example, under the Penal Code, abortion is criminalized except to save a life, yet even this provision is inconsistently applied. National adolescent reproductive health strategies, implemented with UNFPA support, have failed to fully reach young women. According to UNICEF, 44% of health centers in Zanzibar and Tanzania report significant barriers to SRHR access due to stigma, lack of youth-friendly services, and restrictive social norms.

Our research will focus on: Documenting the lived experiences of women and youth navigating the justice and health systems. Identifying structural barriers between law, policy, and practice. Assessing the reach and effectiveness of legal aid and SRHR services, particularly in rural and island communities. Generating youth-led, evidence-based recommendations for policy dialogue and advocacy.

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The goal is to ensure accountability and improve data availability. In Zanzibar, reliable data on health services is limited; often national data on Tanzania is used, which does not capture the reality of Zanzibar. Our research aims to fill these gaps and provide actionable, evidence-based insights for policy and advocacy.

Thank you very much.

*The record reflects that no questions or remarks were raised by other parties.*

**Eva Ibáñez (Ambassador, Spain):** I feel very honored to be here and to hear all these experiences and insights from around the world. I will quickly go through my research. My team and I have focused on areas that are often overlooked, which we believe are key factors shaping gender inequality in Spain.

The first issue is medical violence and gender bias in healthcare. We see structural gender inequality within the Spanish health care system, and we want to focus on three dimensions: obstetric violence, barriers to healthcare access for migrant women, and medical neglect of fibromyalgia, a condition closely linked to gender-biased neglect.

The second issue relates to mental and reproductive health and the systemic neglect of women's bodies in Spain. We observe structural neglect in medical research, healthcare provision, and public health policy. This includes the lack of scientific research on women's specific conditions such as endometriosis or polycystic ovary syndrome, the widespread reliance on hormonal contraception as a default solution, and the persistent lack of accurate information about women's health in general.

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The third issue is gender inequality in care work and the unequal distribution of responsibilities. While this is a global issue, in Spain, care responsibilities still disproportionately fall on women despite advances in gender equality legislation and labor market participation. We aim to analyze the structural causes, social and economic consequences, and potential pathways to address this imbalance.

The fourth issue is pornography consumption and gender socialization. We want to examine how pornography shapes gender norms, sexual expectations, and power relations, particularly affecting young people but also adults, and how this influences attitudes toward women and gender equality.

The fifth issue is the beauty industry, aesthetic medicine, and social media pressure. We want to explore how the beauty industry reinforces unrealistic standards and social pressures, especially through social media, and how cultural expectations of idealized appearances affect women.

That concludes my presentation.

**Adam Alkazely (Executive Chairperson):** Thank you very much, Eva. I'd like to first give the floor to Safa, the Assistant Chairperson, and then Luna, our Ambassadorial Coordinator, before we conclude this session.

**Safa Atiah (Assistant to the Chairperson):** Hi everyone. My name is Safa, Assistant to the Chairperson, and I'm from the United Kingdom. It was really wonderful to hear all of your presentations today. Thank you so much for sharing your work and for the effort you put into preparing and presenting—it truly gave me a lot of food for thought.

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I hope this session also inspires you and provides the opportunity to collaborate and share ideas collectively. You may notice a lot of overlap in the issues being raised, which is a reminder of the importance of learning from each other's experiences and expertise.

Before I hand over to Luna, I'd like to leave you with a quote: "*When life gives you lemons, international collaboration turns a single glass into a shared jug.*" I thought it was quite fitting for today.

*The record reflects that Luna provided informal remarks to the council.*

**Adam Alkazely (Executive Chairperson):** I think what this conference has given us, and our team, is a wealth of ideas from different countries and task forces. We want to create regional cohorts and collaborate more because all of you have brought fantastic insights. Today, we've heard testimonies, analyses, data—yes, even though I know the Libyan representative isn't a fan of data—and we've also heard some of the most passionate arguments, particularly from the Tunisian representative. But at the heart of all this, it's about the human weight behind our advocacy.

The reason we care is because we are human, and every person in this space is united by the commitment to advancing gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals. That is how the world shifts—not all at once, but voice by voice, story by story. When listening becomes action, and action becomes change, that's when real impact happens.

I want to sincerely thank you all for your presence, professionalism over the last two and a half hours, and your commitment. Though this conference is preliminary, the responsibility it carries is not. The work continues throughout the year, and I see a great year ahead for IYCG, especially

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in its first term. I look forward to working with each of you—organizing events, hosting more conferences like this, and advancing gender equality together.

*The record reflects Adam Alkazely providing the council with informal remarks.*

On behalf of Safa, Kevin, Luna, and myself, I want to wish you all a successful year ahead. Thank you again for your incredible speeches and for your dedication today. Goodbye, everyone.

*Day 2 of the Preliminary Investigation Conference formally concluded.*

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