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Statement submitted by African Medical and Research Foundation, Inc., Equality Now, and Orchid Project Limited, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The Global Platform calls on all member states at the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to take urgent action towards the elimination of FGM/C globally.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) is internationally recognised as a gross violation of human rights and a form of violence against women and girls. Over 200 million women worldwide are affected by the harmful practice. This global figure is based only on prevalence estimates from 31 countries, yet FGM/C is present in over 90 countries. The magnitude of the problem requires intensified, urgent international action, in order to reach global commitments to end FGM/C.

FGM/C should be viewed within contextual complexities of the practicing communities and should be addressed through multisectoral response to end the practice. When examining the socio-ecological factors that increase the risk or recurrence of FGM/C, the potential impact of climate change, environmental and disaster risks are often overlooked.

Climate change affects all regions and everyone around the world, however its most negative impacts are borne disproportionately by girls, more than any other age or gender demographic. Surveys conducted to examine the intersection of FGM/C and climate change argue that there is a link between dwindling livelihoods affected by climate change, e.g. as a result of droughts killing livestock and depleting resources, that lead to increased risk of harmful practices such as FGM/C and child marriage. As an adaptive strategy, families resort to secretly cutting and marrying off girls in exchange for bride price.

The Global Platform welcomes the focus of Action Coalition 1 set up under the Generation Equality Forum process on ending Gender-Based Violence and Action Coalition on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, as well as the identification of the concrete actions required to ensure progress towards preventing and eliminating FGM/C.

We particularly welcome the Action Coalition leaders' Collective Commitment on "Accelerating Global Action to End Harmful Practices Against Women and Girls in all their diversity". We call on the Action Coalition Leaders and UNWomen to establish a transparent, third-party monitored accountability mechanism to track the implementation of programmatic and financial commitments by all actors.

Four priority actions have been identified by Action Coalition 1 on setting up Gender-Based Violence in the Global Acceleration Plan released at the end of the Paris meeting of the Generation Equality Forum. Member States need to specifically prioritise FGM/C within each of these actions; and we have set out below our key recommendations for addressing FGM/C within each of these concrete actions.

Action 1: More States and regional actors ratify international and regional conventions and public and private sector institutions strengthen, implement and finance evidence-driven laws, policies and action plans to end gender-based violence against all women and girls in their diversity.

Only 51 countries across the world have specifically addressed FGM/C within their legal framework, and many countries which have laws prohibiting FGM/C fail to effectively implement or enforce these laws. Eradicating FGM/C globally requires strengthened legal frameworks and comprehensive, multisectoral policy interventions to prevent and protect women and girls from FGM/C.

Key Recommendations

- Strengthen global political commitment towards ending FGM/C. Recognize FGM/C as a gross violation of human rights, and implement a zero-tolerance policy for FGM/C, irrespective of the type or form of FGM/C practiced or the perceived severity of the cutting.
- Prioritize ending FGM/C within national legal frameworks. Prohibit FGM/C throughout the country, including cross-border cutting. Encourage effective enforcement and implementation of existing anti-FGM/C laws.
- Mainstream FGM/C Interventions using a multi-sectoral approach. Mainstream FGM/C interventions into gender-based violence, health and development programming, as well as crisis response and recovery. Adopt comprehensive national action plans involving all relevant stakeholders in the elimination of FGM/C and provision of care and protection for survivors; including ensuring necessary budgetary allocation.

Action 2: Scale up implementation and financing of evidence-driven prevention strategies by public and private sector institutions and women's rights organizations to drive down prevalence of gender-based violence against women, adolescent girls and young women in all their diversity including in humanitarian settings.

Historically, there has been limited funding for FGM/C-related research and prevention strategy development. Additionally, a shortage of scientific data as well as the monitoring and evaluation of interventions and strategies, has created a significant gap in knowledge regarding best practices for addressing FGM/C.

Key Recommendations

- Strengthen the evidence base and fill the knowledge gap through critical research on FGM/C, including on survivors' specific needs, impact on economic empowerment, and behaviour change around emerging trends such as medicalisation, cross-border FGM/C and lower ages of cutting. Use community-based participatory approaches within research efforts.
- Increase global funding opportunities for public and private organizations working towards ending FGM/C. Funds should be flexible, sustainable and accessible for communities and grassroot organizations. It is important that these resources overcome geographical barriers and are invested in countries that have not traditionally been prioritized, including in Asia and the Middle East.
- Scale up implementation for comprehensive, evidence-based prevention strategies to eradicate FGM/C by linking advocacy, policy, research, civil society, and health infrastructure sectors. Prioritize the participation of men and boys in prevention strategies, as they play a pivotal role in addressing FGM/C, in addition to incorporating FGM/C prevention into crisis responses and humanitarian settings.

Action 3: Scale up implementation and financing of coordinated, survivor-centred, comprehensive, quality, accessible and affordable services for survivors of gender-based violence against women and girls in all their diversity, including in humanitarian settings

Women and girls who are survivors of a harmful practice must be able to access equal standards of tailored support and care, including physical and psychological services, regardless of where they live.

Key Recommendations

- Ensure provision and accessibility of services for FGM/C survivors, including in humanitarian settings.
- Prioritise and significantly increase investments towards FGM/C survivors' wellbeing in various forms, including in humanitarian settings.
- Scale up funding to systematically train professionals in all relevant sectors (such as health, social work, asylum, education including sex education, law enforcement, justice, child protection, media and humanitarian professionals) on how to effectively respond to cases of FGM/C.

Action 4: Enhance support and increase accountability and quality, flexible funding from states, private sector, foundations and other donors to autonomous girl-led & women's rights organizations working to end gender-based violence against women and girls in all their diversity

The estimated global cost of ending FGM/C in 31 countries alone between 2020 and 2030 stands at \$2.4 billion, but research by UNFPA shows that only 11 per cent of development assistance funding has been made available to meet this goal. Centralising and supporting grassroots and women and girls-led organisations is key to achieving the full abandonment of all forms of FGM/C.

Key recommendations

- Urgently increase the provision of flexible, sustainable and accessible funding to grassroots and women-led organisations working to end FGM/C. This funding should also be made available to those from regions not traditionally prioritised for funding for FGM/C.
- Significantly strengthen provisions for capacity building and technical assistance to grassroots and women and girls-led organisations to support and expand new forms of programmatic activity and innovation towards ending all forms of FGM/C in all regions and countries where the practice is prevalent.
- Ensure the leadership and meaningful participation of women and girls, including survivors of FGM/C, within discussion, design and implementation of all actions to ensure gender equality. This will ensure that the voices of those most affected by FGM/C are leading and owning effective, sustainable and context-specific solutions to end all forms of FGM/C.

These recommended actions will help states deliver truly transformational progress towards ending FGM/C globally. The international community must continue to be a champion for women's rights and against gender-based violence (GBV) worldwide, to ensure women and girls can thrive and fulfil their full potential.