

Delegation from the Republic of El Salvador
Position Paper for UN-Women

The topics before the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) are: Eliminating Child, Early, and Forced Marriage by 2030; and Supporting the Involvement of Women in Governance and Decision-Making. The Delegation from the Republic of El Salvador is highly determined to take all necessary measures for achieving gender equality, closing the gender gap and ensuring girl's and women's rights. Aware of the great importance of UN-Women in this context, the Republic of El Salvador is affirming the significance of its collaboration with UN-Women in order to work for these goals. Considering gender equality and women's rights as an essential part of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Delegation of El Salvador is advocating enhanced international cooperation by coming up with extensive solutions in order to guarantee the above-mentioned rights for every human being.

I. Eliminating Child, Early, and Forced Marriage by 2030

According to *Girls Not Brides*, 12 million girls worldwide are married each year before the age of 18, which is one in every five girls. It is beyond doubt that the world population is going to increase and therefore, the number of child, early and forced marriages (CEFM) is going to grow in the same way. In particular girls living in developing countries are victims to CEFM. In that sense, every fourth Salvadoran girl is said to be married off before celebrating her eighteenth birthday. Despite a law that has been passed to set the legal age of marriage at 18, an alarmingly high number of early marriages remains, which is going along with negative practices against girls, such as early pregnancy, school dropout and vulnerability to domestic violence. In most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) CEFM occurs at a rate similar to the one in El Salvador, which often derives from marriages being carried out in an informal way. There is not enough sufficient available data, hence, the scale of CEFM may easily be underestimated.

Guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Republic of El Salvador is as a co-sponsor welcoming the 2013 Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/26/22 on child, early and forced marriage. Having ratified the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1981 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), we are dedicated to end CEFM by setting the minimum age of marriage at 18 and by mandating states to ensure full consent to marriage. The Republic of El Salvador is seeing the urgent need to eliminate CEFM by 2030 as stated in target 5.3 of the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development. On a national level, the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly voted in 2017 unanimously to amend the Family Code. Decree No.754 has been passed in order to prohibit the marriage of persons under the age of 18 years in any circumstances. This has been a consequence of making children's voices heard by using social media and the U-Report platform. Apart from prohibiting child marriages, the Republic of El Salvador adopted a National Strategy for Comprehensive Early Childhood Development to tackle negative cultural practices and, instead, ensure girls' and boys' opportunities for comprehensive development. Nevertheless, amending the Salvadoran Family Code represents a milestone on our way to end CEFM, which has led to our participation in a Joint Regional Inter-Agency Program and Platform to eliminate child and early marriages in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Cooperating with UN-agencies such as UNICEF, UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), civil society organizations and the Organization of American States (OAS), critical efforts have been made. We appreciate the increasing number of campaigns aiming at raising public awareness on the issue and calling for legal reform. Alongside with this, the cooperation has proven to be a useful platform for exchange, which happened during the international forum on "Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Motherhood in the Americas" in 2016 hosted by the OAS. The forum resulted in identifying knowledge about child marriage in the region, setting priorities for action, defining the OAS' role and making recommendations for future actions.

Despite the Salvadoran Family Code Amendment, we are alarmed by a high number of CEFM in Latin American Countries, the Caribbean and worldwide. Hence, international collaboration and cooperation in order to establish further action plans and priority areas is of uttermost importance to us. The Republic of El Salvador sees the urgent need of improving the extent and efficiency of data collection on a national and international basis, in particular in the LAC region. Therefore, we promote the establishment of a multi-sector data collection network supported by UN-Women and the UNFPA in order to best tackle CEFM. Adding to this, we are looking forward to enhanced cooperation with the Joint Regional Program to eliminate CEFM in LAC. We are willing to increase efforts to establish further campaigns aimed at raising awareness on the issue with a focus on an enhanced educational aspect, since we believe that education is the key to ending CEFM. Educating young boys and girls on their rights might serve as a milestone to raise awareness of the danger of CEFM. The Republic of El

Salvador is looking forward to enriching debates and collaborations with member states in order to come up with promising strategies and action plans to eliminate CEFM in our region and worldwide.

II. Supporting the Involvement of Women in Governance and Decision-Making

Achieving gender-equality is targeted in all areas of life worldwide and in particular in the Republic of El Salvador. According to the law, women and men in El Salvador have equal protection under the law, which gives them the right to an equal voting procedure and to be equally involved in and run for office. Yet, the Republic of El Salvador is noting with deep concern that in relation to men, women are still disadvantaged. Although the involvement of women in politics has increased over the years, according to a 2007 CEDAW report, women only made 32.10% of the Parliament in 2015. Various national and international authorities, as the Human Rights Committee noted in a 2011 report, are concerned about a lack of representation of Salvadoran women in decision-making positions as well as limited participation in public and political life. Women's discrimination in occupation and employment in El Salvador is, therefore, an issue that urgently requires to be acted upon to promote balance in policy making bodies.

As an essential part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Women's rights and therefore women's involvement in decision-making processes and in governance should be of utmost importance to all UN member states. The Republic of El Salvador is glad to see numerous efforts made by UN-Women to end gender inequality. We are, in this sense, standing in full support with the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as an international bill of rights for women. Further, we are welcoming the CEDAW's General Recommendation No.23 made in 1997, so that we firmly believe in the high importance to achieve gender equality in all areas of life, in particular those related to political and public life. Moreover, the Republic of El Salvador supports the Beijing Platform for Action which has been adapted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. We are fully dedicated to it since it serves as a basis to the advancement of women and girls in areas such as politics, economy, education and decision-making. The implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030), going along with the Millennium Development Goals of 2000 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been another milestone on our way to achieving gender equality. Even though every single SDG should be treated as equally important, in this context the Delegation of El Salvador wants to stress the need to focus on SDGs 3, 5 and 10. Alongside with this, we appreciate the UN-Women's Strategic Plan, in particular aiming at the Strategic Plan's Outcome Two: "Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems". The Republic of El Salvador, furthermore, welcomes Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. As for this resolution, we established a national action plan in order to implement it effectively. However, further efforts on a national level have been taken by the Republic of El Salvador through numerous initiatives and laws. To ensure an effective implementation of government plans for the protection of women, the Salvadoran Institute for Development of Women was established in 1996, manifested in the CEDAW combined Third and Fourth Period Report of States Parties, 2003. In combination with this, we implemented the Salvadoran Organization of Women for Peace. Further, the Association of Salvadoran Women Parliamentarians and ex-Parliamentarians offers sufficient training and resources to women to get involved in politics, for instance the "Towards the Political Participation of Women" program. Additionally, the Law of Equality, Fairness and the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women has been passed to improve the judicial framework through implementing further regulations, such as coordination among the institutions and the formulation and evaluation of equality plans and eradication of discrimination. Finally, another law passed by the Salvadoran National Assembly is the ISDEMU, which targets all forms of discrimination, violence and harassment against women.

The Republic of El Salvador would, therefore, like to focus on achieving equal participation through renewing existing regulatory frameworks as well as generating conditions for the effective participation of women in state institutions. We want to promote a communication campaign on a national as well as international level to encourage and motivate the participation of women in governance. Adding to this, we are aiming at adapting an institutional mechanism to monitor women's involvement. For it to be as successful as possible, we want to establish a working group with its single focus on this issue. We promote creating these working groups in further member states that are willing to cooperate, targeting the creation of a complex exchange network. Being optimistic that our Central American allies are going to be willing to join, we are open for any other member state to become part of this working group network or any other cooperation to tackle gender inequality. In the light of this, the Republic of El Salvador wants to stress that we are open for any further ideas. We are looking forward to cooperation and collaboration in order to strengthen women's roles in decision-making all around the world.