

Cross-regional joint statement on SDG 3 and 5

Delivered by Ambassador at large of the Netherlands, Mr. Jeroen Verheul, on behalf of the following countries:

Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay and my own country, the Netherlands.

Mr./ Ms. President, thank you for giving me the floor.

We reaffirm our commitment to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. In 2015, we pledged that nobody will be left behind, that people are placed at the centre of development, and that human rights should be respected, protected and fulfilled without distinction of any kind. The 2030 Agenda aims to eradicate poverty in all its forms, to tackle the root causes of structural inequalities, violence and discrimination, to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and to ensure healthy lives and wellbeing for all.

During this year's High Level Political Forum, SDGs 3 and 5 on health and gender equality are reviewed amongst others. These two SDGs are inherently and strongly connected. Despite extensive efforts to achieve gender equality, women, girls and adolescents continue to be subjected to discrimination, violence and harmful practices and denied the full realization of their human rights, including their right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Women's, girls' and adolescents' autonomy to decide freely on their sexual and reproductive health and rights is often undermined by harmful socio-cultural norms, age barriers and third-party consent requirements and restrictions. As a

result, they cannot access the information they need to make healthy decisions, or get the health services to effectuate their choices. This dire situation is also clearly reflected in the progress report of the Secretary General. Although laudable progress is made, it is still much too slow in critical areas such as violence against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. The report also clearly indicates that just over half of women worldwide are making their own decisions about consensual sexual relations and the use of contraception and health services. Improvements in the collection, use and dissemination of quality age and sex disaggregated data is needed to improve monitoring progress in these areas.

Against this backgrounds, realizing SDG 3 and 5, and in particular universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights are key for sustainable development and a pre-requisite for progress on all other SDGs. It helps to address empower women and girls, inequalities, eradicate poverty, improve educational attainment and public health outcomes, foster productivity and labour force participation, reap the benefits of demographic dividends, improve environmental management, energy, food security, water and sanitation, and enhance resilience and impact of climate adaptation efforts.

Investments in women, girls, adolescents and youths are an investment in our collective future.

We respectfully request that these linkages between SRHR and achieving SDGs 3, 5 and the other SDGs are reflected in the thematic review of these two goals.

We hope that in the further implementation and careful monitoring of the 2030 agenda by the UN and its member states not a single target is left behind.