

Eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and protecting the health and rights of women and children in humanitarian settings

Meeting report

High-level side-event at the 73rd General
Assembly of the United Nations
New York, 24 September 2018

"I am personally convinced that we cannot guarantee the development of our societies humanely and economically if we are not in the position to protect the dignity of the populations that are the most vulnerable."

H.E. Faustin Archange Touadéra, Chair of the event

"In South Sudan, 52% of our young sisters are married before their 18th birthday. I urge leaders not to remain loudly quiet. We call for the inclusion of women in political processes. We have the right to the highest attainable standard of health, whether in conflict or not."

Riya William Yuyada, Executive Director, Crown the Woman, South Sudan

"We know that it is time to act. More than 2 billion people live in countries affected by fragility, violence and conflict—most are women and girls. This is unacceptable. We need political visibility and intensified international cooperation to eliminate gender-based violence and protect the health of women and children in humanitarian settings."

Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS and H6 Chair

"The partnership between the United Nations and the African Union provides an opportunity to reinforce each other's work and employ joint and comprehensive responses to the needs of vulnerable populations in crisis situations."

Smail Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security

"Violence, rape, assault against women and young girls and boys is worldwide and can be likened to a weapon of mass destruction. We are here to do more against all forms of discrimination and crimes committed against women."

Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General,
Organisation internationale de la Francophonie

"Armed conflict creates conditions that allow HIV to flourish, including through rape, sexual slavery, and trafficking and exploitation, in environments where the rule of law and public health services may have collapsed."

Pramilla Patten, Special Representative of the United Nations
Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

"It's not just about the funds, it's also about policies, laws and justice for girls and children, especially considering that 60% of the African continent is under 20 years old."

Deborah Birx, United States Global AIDS Coordinator and Special
Representative for Global Health Diplomacy

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Background

Around the world, violence and conflict are on the rise, both as the cause and the consequence of instability, fragility and mass displacement of people. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable in such humanitarian crises. Violence against women, boys and girls often increases during periods of conflict, and women and girls have been shown to be more adversely affected when populations are displaced by all types of disaster.

In 2017, 68.5 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict or generalized violence; these included 25.4 million refugees, 40 million internally displaced people and 3.1 million asylum-seekers.¹ The total number of displaced people and asylum seekers represented an increase of 2.9 million from 2016. There are 2 billion people living in countries where development outcomes are affected by fragility, conflict and violence.² In 2018, it is estimated that 34 million women of reproductive age will have been negatively affected, with 500 maternal deaths daily in humanitarian and conflict settings.³ Despite these high numbers, statistics fail to show the human face of this ongoing tragedy; the real struggle every individual and family living in fragile situations confront each day.

¹ UNHCR.

² World Bank.

³ UNFPA.

Introduction

Heads of state, government representatives, United Nations, community leaders and various stakeholders gathered in New York on 24 September 2018 for the 73rd General Assembly sessions of the United Nations. This provided an opportunity to build on regional and global frameworks to lay the foundation for a country-focused, action-oriented African Union Emergency Action Plan for urgent implementation. Organized in collaboration with the African Union, UNAIDS and the H6 Partnership (H6), a high-level interactive panel highlighted the country experiences of various key stakeholders with a view to enhancing cooperation between parties to ensure sustainable, people-centered peace, security and development. The side-event was titled, *Eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and protecting the health and rights of women and children in humanitarian settings*.

The panel aimed to provide specific actions and galvanize political commitment at the highest levels to implement the United Nations Secretary-General's call for zero tolerance on sexual and gender-based violence and the African Union's zero tolerance stand on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Participants recognized that protecting the health and rights of women and young people is critical to mitigating fragility, conflict and disaster. In the face of these challenges, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 will help through global health diplomacy efforts to provide concerted action to address the interlinkages among sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender and women's health and rights, human security and HIV in humanitarian settings. This document summarizes the proceedings of the side-event and other related activities.

Panellists

1. Mr Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic
2. Ms Riya William Yuyada, Executive Director, Crown the Woman, South Sudan
3. Mr Smail Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security
4. Mr Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and chair of H6
5. Ms Bience Gawanas, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Africa
6. Ms Sigrid Kaag, Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Netherlands
7. Ms Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General, Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
8. Ms Deborah Birx, Global AIDS Coordinator, United States of America
9. Mr El hadj As Sy, Secretary-General, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
10. Ms Pramilla Patten, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG)
11. Ms Bintou Keita, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operation

Other speakers

The following delegates also provided input to the discussions:

1. Ms Lorena Castillo de Varela, First Lady of Panama
2. Dr Jean Kalilani, Minister for Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare of Malawi
3. Ms Martine Moise, First Lady of Haiti
4. Mr Isaac Adewole, Minister of Health, Nigeria
5. Ms Laure-Marie Kitano, Coordinator of the Network of Women Living with HIV, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The high-level dialogue was chaired by Mr Faustin Archange Touadéra and co-hosted by the African Union and UNAIDS as Chair of H6. It was attended by 350 registered participants.

The side-event aimed to:

1. Galvanize strong political commitment to ensuring human security is at the centre of humanitarian interventions and sustainable development policies by promoting a resilience agenda through global health diplomacy.
2. Reinforce enhanced, strategically coordinated African Union and United Nations leadership on elevating prevention and health promotion in fragile and conflict settings, building on Africa's experience and resilience through people-centered and context-specific actions with global benefits.
3. Confirm the need to build technical capacity to protect health and human security, including prevention of HIV and gender-based violence in peace and security and humanitarian responses.

UNAIDS together with African Union as well as other partners from civil society organizations, other key international stakeholders, community leaders and multilateral institutions came together and pledged their support for a new programme initiative based on a common agenda.

Key points raised by panellists

Panel members shared their experiences of gender-based violence and spoke of their commitment to eradicating it.

Widespread crises derail human lives and wreak havoc on societies

Globally, violence and conflict are on the rise, both as the cause and the consequence of instability, fragility and mass displacement of people. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable in such humanitarian crises. Violence against women and girls often increases during periods of conflict, and women and girls have been shown to be more adversely affected when populations are displaced by all types of disasters.

The high-level dialogue, chaired by Mr Faustin-Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic, and co-hosted by Mr Smail Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, and Mr Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS and H6 Chair, sought to highlight key issues and propose ways to enhance collaboration to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence and to protect the health and rights of women and children in humanitarian settings. It provided an opportunity to convene stakeholders and galvanize political commitment at the highest levels to implement the United Nations Secretary-General's call for zero tolerance on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Women and girls, particularly adolescents, are more adversely affected by humanitarian crises

Sexual and gender-based violence, and negative impacts on the health of women and children, are at particular risk in humanitarian and conflict settings. Adolescents are often drawn into conflict against their will – as part of militias, for instance – and denied their health and protection rights. The correlation between conflict, violence, migration and exploitation requires a unified approach to protect the lives and health of women and children, among whom the effects of social upheaval and the breakdown in law and order are most keenly felt. There are too few programmes, often limited in scope, to prevent gender-based violence during conflict and against migrant and displaced populations.

Mr Chergui underscored how “women and children bear the brunt of conflict”. During crises, health-care systems are interrupted and often collapse, while diseases rise, adding new hardship to people already burdened. President Touadéra emphasized that this climate of vulnerability has made girls and teenagers more susceptible to HIV and other health risks. “They suffer violence and continue to be victims of female genital mutilations, and child and arranged marriages,” he said. Ms Patten similarly noted how “armed conflict creates conditions that allow HIV to flourish, including through rape, sexual slavery, and trafficking and exploitation, in environments where the rule of law and public health services may have collapsed.”

Mr Sy pointed out that humanitarian settings are fertile ground for harmful behaviours towards women and children. "Human dignity in Africa is the last piece of cloth in which people wrap themselves in times of humanitarian crisis. Protection should not come as an afterthought. It ought to be an integral part of life-saving packages and it should happen right from the start," he insisted. Mr Sy emphasized that "principled humanitarian action to address gender-based violence and respond to HIV/AIDS calls for partnership. But maybe that partnership should start where it matters most: between men and women and among government, communities and the private sector, between this generation, and the next one, our children".

Mr Sidibé invited the audience to reflect on a critical question: "Where did we go wrong?" He reported that more than 2 billion people live in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence. 2 billion people whose daily lives are marked by uncertainty and upheavals, mostly women and girls. In 2018, according to the UNFPA, 44 million women of reproductive age will be affected by humanitarian crisis. 5 million of these women will be pregnant. 500 maternal death occurred in humanitarian and conflict settings each day. He warned that we may have "forgotten human security and the potential of humanitarian health" along the way. Eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and protecting the health and rights of women in humanitarian settings requires political commitments from all parties. To achieve these goals, Mr Sidibé called for human security as a pre-requisite for stable resilient and healthy societies. He strongly advocates for connecting the dot between human security, global health and diplomacy agenda which requires according to him "greater political visibility and intensified international cooperation to eliminate sexual gender-based violence and to protect the health of women and children in humanitarian settings. He warned that peace would not come unless collective action leads to education, health and protecting women and girls from violence."

Ms William Yuyada urged leaders not to "remain loudly quiet. We call for the inclusion of women in political processes. It is our bodies, our lives and our futures at stake. We have the right to the best possible health care available in any circumstances, humanitarian or not. We have to find justice for every life lost, every woman raped and for every right denied." She applauded South Sudanese men who joined her in a women's rights march in 2016. The men proudly displayed placards that read, We are all women when it comes to ending war in South Sudan.

Panellists agreed that nobody should be left behind in the quest to eliminate violence and protect rights, and similarly, everyone must be part of the solution.

Ms Patten's account of her experiences speaking with women and girls abducted and held captive by Boko Haram in Nigeria illustrated the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls, and of tackling the stigma of HIV. "Many returned pregnant and/or HIV positive," she said, "and they described facing social stigma and exclusion due to their so-called Boko Haram babies and their actual or perceived

HIV status. So, by isolating the victims and cutting them off from medical care and psycho-social support, stigma promotes the silent spread of HIV/AIDS." She also highlighted the under-reporting of sexual assault, which, in turn, contributes to the spread of HIV and wives being abandoned following sexual assault by militia groups. "For many victims, the fear of rape is swiftly followed by the fear of rejection. Stigma and the risk of reprisals, combined with difficulty in accessing services, leads to chronic underreporting."

Ms Castillo de Varela echoed this point about stigma. "The challenges faced by women and children, particularly in humanitarian settings, are fuelled by stigma and discrimination. Their voices are silent." She advocated strongly for the protection and health of women and children. "They are the present and the future, and our experience is that when you empower them, educate them, the community flourishes."

Ms Keita spoke about the crucial role of peacekeeping forces in combatting sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian and conflict situations. She explained the extensive measures taken to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeeping staff, particularly during pre-deployment training and additional training within mission settings. These measures have been deployed extensively among the Malawi Defense Force, which has adopted a human rights-based approach to HIV and sexual and gender-based violence. Ms Keita detailed the ways in which peacekeeping forces tackle sexual and gender-based violence during their missions, including adopting policies to facilitate reporting of cases of sexual violence, and the deployment of female peacekeepers to aid dialogue with victims. Ms Kaag reiterated that, "If we care about addressing root causes of deprivation, oppression, of issues of abuse, this is the heart of the matter. You want to change the world, you want to do something for 50% of the world's population, mostly in developing countries, conflict-affected settings, and you choose women and girls. They are the multiplier; they are the game-changers."

Building the path towards a collective response

Together, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 create an important political window to address the above-mentioned challenges and opportunities. These commitments provide a timely opportunity to increase collaboration on human security and humanitarian health in the context of the recently adopted Joint United Nations–African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. "The SDGs provide us with a blueprint for a better world," Ms Patten said, "and it is critical at this time that we ensure that women, even in remote and war-torn regions, are not left behind or excluded from the dividends of sustainable development." Given the mechanisms for change that are readily available, Ms Kaag pointed out that everybody has to explain why they are not partnering; the onus is on them.

The International Organization of Francophonie promotes comprehensive action and partnership in efforts to uphold women's rights in all circumstances. "Robust partnerships are needed. Let's bet on our efforts and our synergy," said Ms Jean. The strategic alliance among her organization, the Ibero-American General Secretariat and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries provides a good illustration of such efforts, she added.

Several speakers stressed the importance of deepening cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations to end sexual and gender-based violence and to safeguard the rights of women and children in humanitarian settings. "To build

capacity in this area, the links between H6 Partnership initiatives and responses to sexual and gender-based violence need to be strengthened and adequate funding is needed," said President Touadéra. Mr Chergui added that the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations provided an opportunity to reinforce each other and employ joint and comprehensive approaches in responding to the needs of vulnerable populations in crisis situations, though more needs to be done to reach our goal. He called for further cooperation to enhance efforts towards achieving this common objective and to ensure that the human rights of women are promoted and that mechanisms exist to protect them from violence, including health-related consequences.

Ms Kalilani, describing how she managed responses to natural disasters in her native Malawi, said that emergency responses require the coordination of various agencies. She encouraged governments to set aside resources in annual budgets to respond to possible disasters and welcomed the strengthened partnership among the African Union, UNAIDS and H6 to ensure HIV prevention is mainstreamed in emergency situations.

Mr Adewole affirmed that multilateral cooperation remains fundamental to addressing violation against women and children. "Nigeria is implementing awareness-raising campaigns for parents, families and communities at national, state and local government levels on the critical role of protecting children from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation," he said.

Ms Moise shared the experience of Haiti, which is particularly vulnerable to disasters related to climate change, leading to impoverishment, reduced opportunities and development setbacks. She said, "Haiti has known its fair share of natural catastrophes, from earthquakes to hurricanes, making women and girls particularly vulnerable. Gender-based violence is also all too common, not only in situations of civil unrest but also in their households. I am personally committed to the fight against gender-based violence, as well as for the promotion of the health and well-being of women and adolescents in Haiti."

Several speakers noted the essential role communities play in preventing and repairing the disastrous consequences of conflict. Ms Bix highlighted the success of the DREAMS partnership (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe) in reducing rates of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, and emphasized the importance of local support. Outcomes were extraordinary, she said, because the people on the ground, community by community, wrapped their arms around these girls and women and gave them a voice and listened to their concerns and brought forward protection in a new way.

Ms Kitanu gave a moving statement on behalf of women who have survived violence and women living with HIV in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where rape continues to be used a weapon of war and HIV transmission most frequently results from sexual violence and conflict. "We call out to the international community to strengthen HIV testing and prevention capacities. We implore you to maintain the priority of peace and stability so that we have a long-lasting solution. We commend this African Union and UNAIDS initiative," she said.

Several speakers focused on the value of human security as a means to address the problems of sexual and gender-based violence, HIV and poor health outcomes for women and girls. Ms Gawanas argued that it is in the context of human security that we can guarantee that women and children's rights to health, their right to development, their right to peace, will be respected. Ms Kaag commended the African Union and the

United Nations for the clear recommendations outlined in the background document prepared ahead of the dialogue, and the link it created “from human security to protection, to well-being and sustainable development.”



The way forward

Mr Chergui announced that he would be visiting South Sudan shortly after the dialogue, along with Mr Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, to discuss the revitalization of the peace agreement. He assured participants that the key messages from the dialogue would be heard again there.

Mr Sidibé and President Touadéra of the Central African Republic agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding that emphasizes the value and importance of continuing discussion on cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations to end HIV and gender-based and sexual violence in humanitarian situations.

The 17th Summit of l'Organisation de la Francophonie was held in Yerevan, Armenia, where Member States adopted a strategy to promote gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women and girls. Gender-based violence featured prominently on the agenda. Among the commitments made, UNAIDS supported the African Union in developing a joint African Union–United Nations action plan. The plan includes developing training and awareness tools for uniformed personnel in peacekeeping operations and ensuring better reporting rates on sexual exploitation and violence against women and girls. Adequate funding needs to be secured to strengthen programme coordination in the response to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and HIV in humanitarian settings. Enhanced cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations will be paramount to ensuring sustainable, people-centered peace, security and development.

Priority areas of action for the African Union and United Nations

1. Through partnership, put in place measures to end sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable populations, especially young women, adolescents and children, during conflict and post-conflict settings.
2. Treat all survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse with dignity, and ensure provision of life-saving treatment and care services.
3. Prevent the continuing cycle of sexual exploitation and abuse by addressing its root causes and consequences.
4. Recognize the critical role of peacekeeping missions and uniformed services in creating the right environment to end sexual violence.
5. Invest in innovative solutions to reach vulnerable populations living in or migrating through high-risk settings of instability and crisis.
6. Put human rights at the core of collective efforts in protecting and securing basic freedoms for all survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Call to action

The Chair concluded with a call to action that highlighted the urgent need for innovative and comprehensive approaches to address emerging challenges and tackle the root causes of crises and vulnerabilities, including through integration of sexual and gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health in humanitarian response plans. The followings actions were emphasized:

1. Scale up H6 as a coordination tool and ensure it is adequately funded.
2. Protect women and girls and fund programmes that seek to achieve this.
3. Develop training and awareness tools for uniformed personnel in peacekeeping operations with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse. Such efforts should include workshops, training sessions and the training of trainers.
4. Develop gender-responsive strategies, including for HIV, and provide awareness training for members of security sectors, including on the prohibition of sexual violence under international law.
5. Improve outreach and sensitize communities of the need for medical attention among victims.
6. Strengthen political leadership from all stakeholders, including from the African Union-United Nations collaboration.
7. Support country-level technical support in fragile countries, and conduct an African Union technical experts meeting to draw a roadmap and plan of action for joint activities in 2019.
8. Develop a joint programme of work leading to annual meetings between the African Union and H6, and a plan of action.
9. For the United Nations, collaboration across the system should be strengthened to ensure more systematic reporting on HIV, sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the implementation of the H6 Results 2020 framework in humanitarian settings and the integration of H6 priorities into the resilience agenda of disaster risk reduction.
10. For the African Union, the A3 members (African countries of the UN Security Council) have a particular role to play by putting sexual and gender-based violence and the protection of the health and rights of women and children in fragile and conflict-affected settings on the Security Council agenda during their respective presidencies.

Conclusion

This was the first side-event meeting on eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and protecting the health and rights of women and children in humanitarian settings organized by the African Union and United Nations. This event was an opportunity for greater interaction to set out modalities and actionable recommendations, particularly for enhanced African Union-United Nations collaboration. Presentations by expert panellists provided insight on how to deal decisively with intrinsic and extrinsic causes of violence against women and children insight that could help guide better policy formulation and implementation on a global scale.



Annexes

Annex 1. Selected statements and speeches made during the side-event

Annex 2. Summary of recommendations

Annex 3. Plan of action priorities area

Annex 4. Consolidated list of participants

Annex 1. Selected statements and speeches made during the side-event (verbatim)

1. Mr Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests. I accepted to chair this high-level event meeting on “Eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and protecting the health and rights of women and children in humanitarian settings” because I am personally convinced that we cannot guarantee the development of our societies humanely and economically if we are not in the position to protect the dignity of the populations that are the most vulnerable. The media of the whole world follows the crises that continue to emerge in many countries and there are no regions in West, East and Central Africa that are not affected. Most of them are facing humanitarian crisis following terrorism of countries as well as post conflict situation. The conflict and the natural disaster contributed to the instability as well as the internal displacement of thousands of people within the borders and outside. Indeed the internal displaced have increased the sexist violence as well as humanitarian rights violations. This climate has made young girls and adolescents much more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection and continues to be victims of mutilations and early marriages.

So it's possible to change this fact. How? Certain numbers of countries have been working with the United Nations and partners to coordinate the work on the prevention as well the reaction to this. The region has put in place the fight against discrimination and sexual violence. I have ambitions of zero HIV/AIDS prevalence and zero sexual and gender-based violence. The armed conflict in RCA has increased the sexual gender-based violence and degrading in human treatment of women and young girls. In 2016 60% in case of sexual violence was committed by armed forced as well peacekeeping troops. Last year alone the uniformed perpetrators of the sexual violence and GBV was decreased. Most of them have limited knowledge which bring about practices in the behaviors which risky to HIV/AIDS spread. This is why we are working with armed force and the uniformed forces to ensure that we link to sexual violence and GBV and the reproductive health within the uniformed police and to involve them in education prevention, dissemination and counseling to eliminate and in order to reduce the prevalence in central Africa. This is an issue I wish to accord the highest attention as the director of the National Committee on HIV AIDS, the Ministers of Police and defense to continue to work in achieving zero HIV and prevalence as well sexual and gender based violence. This will continue reestablishing the RoL in Central Africa Republic. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) with UNAIDS, my dear friend Michel Sidibé, will be signed next month. Now the protocol gets in to reiterate the importance of the discussion that we are holding today that is the cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations to bring to end HIV/AIDS and GBV and eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and protecting the health and rights of women and children in humanitarian settings. So to further support and build capacity the linkage between the initiatives of the partnership of the H6, we will continue to further strengthening and financing adequately.

Thank you!

2. Statement of H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, on the occasion of the International Day of Peace

Honourable Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS and Chair of H6, Partnership, Distinguished Delegates, Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and on my own behalf, it is my honour to welcome you to this high-level dialogue to discuss an extremely important topic that concerns all of us. You will all agree with me that eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and protecting the health and the rights of women and children in humanitarian settings is our shared responsibility. As a result, this needs to be at the heart of all humanitarian, development and peace and security efforts. In this regard, the African Union Commission would like to thank UNAIDS and the H6 partnership for their continued efforts in ensuring that these issues are at the top of the agenda of our institutions and Member States and for our partnership in organizing this very important side-event today. Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are all aware that women and children bear the brunt of conflicts and we have also observed high incidence of HIV and AIDS among girls and women, high population of refugee and internally displaced women, limited access of girls to education, and marriages of young girls. We have also noted other harmful traditional practices that violate the dignity and human rights of young girls. In situations of armed conflict and other humanitarian crisis, sexual and gender based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse have even more severe consequences on the health and dignity of women and girls.

Noting the above, and recognizing the most likely linkage between sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict situations and transmission of HIV, the need for our institutions and Member States to continuously enhance and strengthen implementation of our zero- tolerance stance on any act of sexual exploitation and abuse becomes crucial. This is why the African Union and the United Nations take any act of sexual exploitation and abuse by our mission personnel extremely seriously.

As a Commission, we are guided by our policy organs, including the AU Peace and Security Council which, in the Communique of its 659th meeting, stresses the need for ensuring full protection of women and girls in countries affected by conflicts and crises. Importantly also, we are happy that our Member States are in full support of our work on these issues. This includes through facilitating preventive measures such as training on minimum standards as well as in the imposition of stiff penalties against perpetrators of sexual violence. These penalties are applied across the board, regardless of the status or rank of our personnel to ensure effective response and remedial actions if violations occur – in line with the same Communique of the 659th meeting of the PSC.

African Union's efforts to eliminate all forms of sexual and gender-based violence are guided by our zero-tolerance policy and principle on sexual exploitation and abuse by our staff and Peace Support Operations (PSOs) personnel. This policy and principle has also been reflected in a number of Communiqués of the AU Peace and Security Council, as well as in the Conduct and Discipline Policy in AU PSO and the Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in AU PSOs.

Additionally, African Union's efforts on the linkages between sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict situations and transmission of HIV are underpinned by the Africa Health Strategy 2016–2030 and 2016–2030 Maputo Plan of Action. These guiding documents call on Member States, civil society, the private sector and multi-sectoral development partners to join forces and operationalize the continental policy framework on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls.

As per our commitment, we will continue working towards eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and protecting the health and the rights of women and children in humanitarian settings. In this regard, we believe that the partnership between the African Union and United Nations provides for an opportunity to reinforce our efforts and employ joint and comprehensive approaches in responding to the needs of vulnerable populations in crisis situations. As result, we are happy that the Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security that the Chairperson of the AU Commission and UN Secretary General signed on 19 April 2017 also underlines the need for the two organizations to collaborate and reinforce each other in a complementary manner.

The joint AU-UN framework and efforts between the AU and UN is also underpinned by the importance of compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. The UN Security Council has also reiterated the importance of this partnership, in particular in its resolutions 2320 and 2378, adopted in 2016 and 2017 respectively. These resolutions equally reiterated the importance of transparency, accountability and respect of international norms, including taking adequate measures to prevent and combat impunity for sexual exploitation and abuse.

Notwithstanding, there is a need to dedicate adequate resources to raise awareness among Member States on these issues. Additionally, we should ensure that effective response and remedial mechanisms, including access to adequate health care, are in place for victims of sexual violence in conflict and humanitarian settings. In this regard, it is important to recognize the role that Peace Support Operations personnel could play in ensuring effective preventive and adequate responses and remedial actions as may be required.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to commend all African leaders for the efforts to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse and transmission of HIV and AIDS from the African continent. Nevertheless, more needs to be done in order to reach our goal. Thus, it is important that we all work together to continue enhancing our efforts. It is only through such joint efforts that we will be able to achieve the common objective of ensuring that the human rights of women are promoted. This in-turn will also enable us to better protect women and girls from violations, including health related consequences.

I thank you.

3. Statement of Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS and H6 Chair

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the outset, I would like to thank my brother Chairperson Moussa Faki of the African Union for his personal commitment and my friend and brother AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Chergui for organizing this critical session today.

Today's gathering is timely and topical. Timely because too often people's right to health is not being upheld in fragile and conflict affected settings. Topical because it complements the Secretary General's call for a renewed focus on prevention and building resilience.

I was in South Sudan earlier this year and I saw first-hand what Riya described for us.

An alarming situation is unfolding. I was shocked to learn that unmet needs contribute to 43% of all new HIV infections. And thank you Riya for your powerful testimony. But Riya is not the only one. Far from it.

More than 2 billion people live in countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence. 2 billion people whose daily life is marked by uncertainty and upheaval.

We all know that unfortunately the most affected are women and girls. In 2018, we know that 34 million women of reproductive age will be affected by humanitarian crises. 5 million of these women will be pregnant. 500 maternal deaths occur in humanitarian and conflict settings each day. I know we all agree this is unacceptable.

Where did we go wrong? We forgot human security and the potential of humanitarian health. We need to protect the health and rights of women and young people. A refocusing on human security is one of the only ways to mitigate fragility, conflict and disaster. One of the only ways to accelerate recovery and strengthen the rule of law, equity, equality and inclusive growth. It is a pre-requisite for stable, resilient and healthy societies.

This can only happen if we connect the dots between human security and the global health diplomacy agenda. We urgently need greater political visibility and intensified international cooperation to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence and to protect the health of women and children in humanitarian settings.

I call on all Member States to ensure that upholding the rights of women and girls and preventing sexual and gender-based violence are front and centre in their humanitarian policy.

The time for action is now.

On my return from South Sudan we launched the 100-Day Emergency Action Plan on the right to health. I will travel soon to the Central African Republic and I will be signing a protocol for ending AIDS and gender-based violence in the army.

I heard energy, passion and dedication today. Let us channel this into concrete actions in the coming year. Our challenge will be our capacity to restore people's health and pave the road towards dignity, peace and reconciliation.

So we build resilience and protect the right to a healthy life for all.

4. Ms Riya William Yuyada, Executive Director, Crown the Woman, South Sudan

Your Excellency, honourable President of the Central African Republic, all protocol observed, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of Civil Society, South Sudan. It is an honour to be a mouthpiece for those who suffer and are so rarely heard.

I am pleased to convey the good news that my country's leaders just re-signed a commitment to promote sustainable peace. I am also happy with the role women played to ensure that the agreement was signed and for the inclusion of gender provisions on affirmative action for women that holds all perpetrators of sexual violence accountable.

Although faced with enormous obstacles, civil society in South Sudan continue to act on issues affecting women's lives and livelihoods especially sexual and gender-based violence. For example, in 2017 women of South Sudan organized around 16 days of activism to demand an end to the war and to protect our rights. It was deeply moving when some men playing football left their game and joined our march and wrote on placards that we are all women when it comes to ending war in South Sudan.

Yet despite these efforts and the re-signing of the agreement, my heart bleeds as fighting continues in my country. On behalf of all women of South Sudan I urge our leaders here, not to remain loudly quiet in their deliberations with parties to the conflict and to take steps for the end of a culture of impunity. We call for substantive inclusion of women in all political processes, so that we can inform policy including the making of the constitution and not just as victims receiving services. It is our bodies, our lives and our futures at stake. We have the right to the best possible health care available in any circumstance, humanitarian or not.

We have to find justice for every life lost, for every woman raped, and for every right denied which is no more than the substance of the Committee on elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women ratified by our government in 2014.

Finally we must acknowledge that the girls and the women on the African continent have been left behind for too long and therefore insist on a cohesive and holistic approach. The way forward is to involve men AND women boys AND girls working together and encouraging men to be positive agents of change in ensuring that we their sisters, mothers, wives, girlfriends are not left behind. Development will not be attained if we the women—the backbone of society are left behind.

TOGETHER WE CAN CREATE POSITIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE! THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!!! THANK YOU!

Annex 2. Summary of recommendations

Summary of recommendations from joint background report for side-event

A background document was prepared for the side-event that aimed to inform discussions and set out recommendations, particularly for enhanced African Union-United Nations collaboration, summarized below.

Joint African Union and UN actions

To set a common agenda and guide concerted action in addressing the interlinkages between sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender and women's health and rights, human security and HIV in humanitarian settings:

- > Develop a medium-term joint programme of work in the context of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security.
- > Convene an annual meeting between the leadership of the African Union and the Hó partnership to develop and monitor an annual roadmap to take forward the common agenda.
- > Develop a comprehensive and integrated African Union-United Nations action plan that would include the development of tools for awareness-raising and training programmes for uniformed personnel in peacekeeping operations, and strengthen African Union-United Nations architecture for joint, evidence-informed action to address sexual and gender-based violence and HIV in conflicts and humanitarian emergencies.
- > Conduct targeted advocacy for resource mobilization and partnerships to strengthen coordinated programme implementation for the responses to sexual exploitation and abuse and HIV in humanitarian settings.

African Union actions

- > Encourage the African members of the United Nations Security Council (A3) to put sexual and gender-based violence and protection of the health and rights of women and children in fragile and conflict-affected settings on the Security Council agenda during their respective presidencies.
 - > Ensure wide dissemination of the recommendations of this side-event through relevant African Union organs, including during the African Union Summit in January 2019.
 - > Conduct targeted advocacy for resource mobilization and partnerships to strengthen coordinated programme implementation for the responses to sexual exploitation and abuse and HIV in humanitarian settings.
-

United Nations actions

- > Strengthen collaboration across the United Nations system to ensure more systematic reporting on HIV, sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual and gender-based violence, including their impact on women's and children's health in conflict settings, drawing on data from a range of partners, such as UNAIDS, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UN Women.
 - > Establish innovative mechanisms to strengthen collaboration between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and IOM for joint implementation of the H6 Results 2020 framework in humanitarian settings.
 - > Strengthen cooperation with United Nations health-related agencies and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) to integrate H6 priorities into the resilience agenda of disaster risk reduction and cooperation with the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.
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Annex 3. Plan of action priorities area

Categories	Area	Action
Humanitarian response	South Sudan Kenya DRC CAR Lake Chad Somalia Ethiopia Lake Chad initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen comprehensive HIV services ▪ Vulnerability profiling ▪ Rapid assessment ▪ Country action plans: integration of HIV and trauma services into the humanitarian country plan. ▪ Preparedness and contingency planning (cyclical crisis) ▪ Post-disaster needs assessment ▪ Disaster risk reduction/rights and health care ▪ Private-sector engagement: develop civil society-based preparedness and contingency planning as part of resilience agenda ▪ Generate information on coping mechanisms and building resilience ▪ Domesticating H6 into country plans, highlighting women's sexual and reproductive health rights
Migration	ESA WCA MENA AP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Domesticate Global Compact on Migration ▪ Develop standard operating procedures for continuity of care ▪ Provide physiological and psycho-social support ▪ Support cross-border dialogue to ensure critical aspects of H6 relevant to young people; minimum package ▪ Generate information on migrant journeys ▪ Urban centres and services access ▪ Integration and protection
Peacekeeping missions	South Sudan DRC Mali CAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint response with African Union/UNAIDS standby force/the Lake Chad initiative ▪ Uniformed services, including prisons ▪ Pre-deployment training ▪ Integration into UNCT/Joint Team ▪ Post deployment – cadre of champions Training of Trainers (ToT)/ female officers trained in key aspects H6. Female officers given capacity to identify and respond to sexual and gender-based violence ▪ Reporting mechanisms for United Nations Security Resolution (1983) ▪ Reaching young people in conflict/militia as part of H6, including working with relevant governments and civil society partners. Facilitate demobilization of child soldiers and provision of trauma services for young people caught up in violence and conflict (South Sudan) ▪ Detection and treatment focused on the national military, and greater investment in protection programmes focused on women and children ▪ Support HIV cross-cutting and mainstreaming in key related functions of peacekeeping operations, including Rules of Law (RoL), gender, Protection of Civilians (PoC), Political Affairs division (PAD), civil affairs and human rights.

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“They need peace; they cry for peace, yearn for hope and try to retain the human dignity that they have lost along the way. It is the last piece of cloth, as we say in Africa that is torn apart by gender- and sexual-based violence. Protection should not come as an afterthought.”

Elhadj As Sy, Secretary-General, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

“Female peacekeepers are now being deployed to facilitate dialogue as well as women protection advisers for a more comprehensive approach to peacekeeping. Peacekeepers are also the ones who provide civilian peace and security, men and women who are committed to provide the best peace they can.”

Bintou Keita, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

“Since I started this journey with UNAIDS and the United Nations, two powerful words have guided me: zero discrimination. The challenges faced by women and children – particularly in humanitarian settings – are fuelled by stigma and discrimination, creating obstacles that block access to vital health services, such as HIV testing and life-saving medicines. Zero discrimination should fill every space in the world.”

Lorena Castillo de Varela, First Lady of Panama

“Haiti has known its fair share of natural catastrophes, from earthquakes to hurricanes, making women and girls particularly vulnerable. In Haiti, gender-based violence is also all too common. I support fully the fight against violence against women and gender-based violence. This is a fight that must involve all.”

Martine Moise, First Lady of Haiti

“We have cried out to the international community for help in regard to HIV testing and prevention and we implore you to maintain the priority of peace and stability so that we have a long-lasting solution. We commend this African Union and UNAIDS initiative.”

Laure-Marie Kitanu, Coordinator of the Network of Women Living with HIV, Democratic Republic of the Congo

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