

Soroptimist international and partners, thank you for the opportunity to present this statement and for the work you do on this issue.

COVID-19 and its “shadow pandemic” on girls and young women risk reversing 25 years’ worth of global gains in girls’ education and exposing girls to a higher chance of underage marriage, gender-related violence and human trafficking. It also sets back progress for women and girls, who constitute 50% of the population, in enjoying their human rights and the right to development; all of which are even further exacerbated in humanitarian or armed conflict situations.

We are already seeing numerous examples regarding the pandemic’s negative impact on child, early and forced marriage and human trafficking which both the UN Secretary-General and recently adopted General Assembly Resolutions are addressing. E.g.as a result of the pandemic there may be 13 million more cases of child, early and forced marriage that otherwise would have been averted by 2030 and there is already a 185% rise in trafficking cases compared to last year according to the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking.

*We urge* member states to:

- honour their human rights obligation to prevent and protect women and hold perpetrators accountable for all gender-based violence and refrain from invoking religion, custom or tradition to avoid their obligations;
- finance and increase systematic gender and age disaggregated collection, analysis, monitoring of data to determine the impact of the pandemic on victims of trafficking and child, early and forced marriage as well as the modus operandi of organised crime groups and accountability;
- ensure the provision of essential services to victims of gender-related violence;
- ensure that services, including police and judicial services, for gender-based violence survivors are regarded as essential, remain open and are resourced and accessible.

This pandemic might be just a dress rehearsal for additional pandemics and climate change. Our recommendations would go toward creating resilience in meeting these challenges as you have already so wonderfully done and continue to do and enable all of us to meet these challenges together.