



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

6 August, 2014

Excellency,

I refer to resolution 68/148 entitled 'Child, early and forced marriage' by which the General Assembly decided to convene during its sixty-eighth session a panel discussion on child, early and forced marriage worldwide, including the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

Cognizant of the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls, who are adversely impacted by child, early and forced marriage in terms of education, health, gender equality, poverty and insecurity, and the need to scale up efforts to, inter alia, address its systemic and underlying factors, as well as implementation gaps, I inform that the panel discussion will be convened on Friday, 5 September, 2014 in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York.

In preparation for your participation, I attach a copy of the Concept Note for the panel discussion. Please be informed that a draft provisional programme will be circulated in due course.

I encourage all member States to be represented and to participate actively in the panel discussion.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John W. Ashe".

John W. Ashe

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

68th Session of the General Assembly

Panel Discussion – Child, Early and Forced Marriage Worldwide, including the Elaboration of the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Trusteeship Council Chamber, CB

Date: 5 September, 2014

10:00-13:00

Background

In its resolution 68/148, the General Assembly decided to convene a panel discussion on child, early and forced marriage worldwide, including the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda. The panel discussion will build on the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage,¹ which was prepared pursuant to the Human Rights Council's resolution 24/23, and the related summary report of the panel discussion convened by the Council on 23 June, 2014 during its twenty-sixth session. Both reports will be transmitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session in accordance with resolution 68/148.

According to UNICEF, as noted in the OHCHR Report, in 2012, 41 per cent of women aged 20-49 around the world had been married or entered into a union before they reached 18 years of age. The OHCHR Report provides a broad assessment of the issue and will be utilized during this panel discussion as a spring board to further elaborate on and demonstrate the implications and negative effects of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) on women and girls development. Given the request of many Member States for additional information on the nature of CEFM and the upcoming negotiation of the post-2015 development agenda framework, the panel discussion will highlight the development costs of child, early and forced marriage from the perspective of the following Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): 1) extreme poverty and hunger; 2) universal primary education; 3) gender equality; 4) child mortality; 5) maternal health; and 6) combat HIV and other diseases.

In the case of MDG 2 on universal primary education, the panel discussion will explore the implications of child, early and forced marriage to a girl's development at the community and national levels. For example, in some countries, married girls are often barred from attending school. In cases where they are allowed to attend school, they suffer stigma which robs them of the opportunity to gain the skills they require to lift themselves, their children and their families out of poverty. It is an undisputed fact that child, early and forced marriage perpetuates the cycle of poverty, as girls who marry young are more likely to be poor and the children (especially the girls) of these unions are more likely to suffer the same sad fate as their young mothers. In the case of child mortality and maternal health, complications related to pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for girls aged 15-19 in the developing world. Ninety per cent of these girls are married and are also at an increased risk of exposure to HIV and other diseases.

¹ A/HRC/26/22

Objective

The panel discussion will build on the OHCHR report by focusing on the development costs of child, early and forced marriage, specifically in relation to poverty, health and education. It will provide also an opportunity for participants to identify and analyze challenges, achievements and best practices, as well as to address gaps in implementation and responses to child, early and forced marriages from a national, regional and global perspective. Framing child, early and forced marriage as a barrier to development elevates the importance of preventing and eliminating the detrimental practice at the community, state and regional level and will build further consensus and momentum for action at all levels, including in the negotiation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Format

The panel will take the format of an interactive discussion. Participation will include member States, Observers, relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and relevant stakeholders. Following the presentations by the selected panelists, representatives will be invited to make brief remarks from the floor not exceeding three minutes, pose questions and/or respond or comment to information presented by the panelists. Written statements are strongly discouraged.

To help guide the discussion participants are asked to consider the following issues in formulating their interventions:

1. How child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) hinders girls' development –for girls individually, and also at the community and national levels.
2. How CEFM has hindered implementation of the Millennium Development Goals 1 (poverty and hunger); 2 (universal primary education); 3 (gender equality); 4 (child mortality); 5 (maternal health); and 6 (combat HIV and other diseases).
3. Successful initiatives/interventions that address the causes and consequences of CEFM. The potential for replication of these initiatives/interventions in other contexts, and concrete recommendations regarding if and how these initiatives/interventions could be successfully scaled up.
4. Recommendations for how CEFM can be addressed most effectively in the post-2015 development agenda.

Outcome

An informal summary report on the panel discussion will be prepared and will be made available to member States.