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ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM X: [Annual full day discussion on the rights of women]

AGENDA 2030 SHOULD DELIVER SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

UN Human Rights Council
[Thirty-fifth] session
[27 February - 24 March] 2017

Amnesty International welcomes this panel discussion on women's rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Amnesty International's research in multiple countries has demonstrated that laws, policies and practices that criminalise or punish women and girls' sexual and reproductive actions and decisions, or ban or restrict health information and services, serve as serious barriers to the enjoyment of their human rights, health, and wellbeing. This risks undermining the effective implementation and realisation of Goals 3 and 5. Gender equality cannot be achieved without women and girls being empowered to make free choices about their sexuality and reproduction including through access to health services and information in line with human rights law and standards.

The organisation is also concerned that these and other barriers disproportionately affect marginalized women and girls, and exacerbate existing inequalities. Addressing intersectional discrimination, and ensuring that the most marginalised groups are prioritized in the design and implementation of laws, policies and programmes guaranteeing the right to health, and all sexual and reproductive rights, is essential to delivering on the promise of the SDGs.

Equally crucial is ensuring robust mechanisms for accountability at every level. Women and girls must have access to affordable and effective accountability mechanisms to ensure the realization of all rights related to the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore states must develop, disseminate, and fund mechanisms to monitor the implementation of policies relevant to the realization of Goals 3 and 5.

Amnesty International therefore calls on the Human Rights Council to urge States to:

- Repeal laws, review policies and change practices which criminalize or punish women and girls' sexual and reproductive actions and decisions, including laws criminalizing abortion, women's conduct during pregnancy, same-sex sexual activity, adolescent sexuality or provision of health information.

- Systemically monitor women and girls' access to the right to health, and all sexual and reproductive rights, including by collecting data disaggregated by all relevant prohibited grounds of discrimination, so as to better address intersectional discrimination.
- Improve accountability mechanisms at every level, including by implementing relevant recommendations in the recent Report of the High-Level Working Group on the Health and Human Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents¹

¹ WHO, Leading the realization of human rights to health and through health. Report of the High-Level Working Group on the Health and Human Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents, 2017, available at: <http://www.who.int/life-course/publications/hhr-of-women-children-adolescents-report/en/>