

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 Michaele 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 services 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.

Annex 4. Consolidated list of participants

N°	Country	Name	Title	E-mail
1	Bangladesh	Mr. Masud Bin Momen	Ambassador	bangladesh@un.int
2	Bangladesh	Mrs. Aliya Najma Nur	Police Adviser	bangladesh@un.int
3	Bangladesh	Mrs. Nazmun Nahar	Military Adviser	bangladesh@un.int
4	Benin	Mrs. Caroline L.D. Adjaho	Police Adviser	beninewyork@gmail.com
5	Benin	Mrs. Janine Aplogan-Aho	Military Adviser	beninewyork@gmail.com
6	Botswana	Ms. Neo Jane Masi	First Lady Botswana	Kgomodise@gov.bw
7	Botswana	Ms. Isabelita Galano	Permanent Mission of Botswana	igalano@gov.bw
8	Botswana	Ms. Kgomotso Modise	Permanent Mission of Botswana	Kgomodise@gov.bw
9	Burundi	Mrs. Rehema Mariza	Military Adviser	ambabunewyork@yahoo.fr
10	Burundi	Ms. Charlot Ndayishimiye	Police Adviser	ambabunewyork@yahoo.fr
11	Burkina Faso	Ms. Marie L. Ilboudo	Ministre de la Femme	laurenceilboudo@yahoo.fr
12	Burkina Faso	Mr. Noaga E. Ouedraogo	Military Adviser	bfapm@un.int
13	Burkina Faso	Ms. Binta B. Kargougou	Police Adviser	bfapm@un.int
14	Burkina Faso	Dr. Didier Bakouan	Secrétaire Permanent/CNLS	Drbakouan@yahoo.fr
15	Burkina Faso	Ms. Ouedraogo Haoua	Association ZEMSTAABA/AZET	Ohaoua81@gmail.com
16	Burkina Faso	Ms. Mariama Fofona	Représentant Permanent Adjoint	bfapm@un.int
17	Burkina Faso	Ms. Myriam A. Soulama	Permanent Mission of Burkina Faso	bfapm@un.int
18	Cameroon	Mrs. Bertine D. M. Eso	Military Adviser	cameroon.mission@yahoo.com
19	Cameroon	Mr. Mamoudou Mana	Police Adviser	cameroon.mission@yahoo.com
20	Central African Rep	H.E. Faustin A. Touadéra	President of the CAR	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
21	Central African Rep	Mr. Pierre Somse	Minister of Health	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
22	Central African Rep	Ms. Mélanie Nina Goliatha	Permanent Mission of CAR	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
23	Central African Rep	Ms. Ambroisine Kpongo	Ambassador Extraordinary	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
24	Central African Rep	Mr. Larry Marcel Koyma	First Counsellor	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
25	Central African Rep	Mr. Marcien Kpatamango	Legal Counsellor	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
26	Central African Rep	Ms. Clarisse K. Endjeleze	Counsellor	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
27	Central African Rep	Ms. Mélanie C.N Goliatha	Political Adviser	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
28	Central African Rep	Mr. Patrick F. Loungoulah	Social and Humanitarian Affairs	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
29	Central African Rep	Ms. Sylvie C.L Ouangolo	Permanent Mission of CAR	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
30	Central African Rep	Mr. Yannick-M.L. Brinz	Permanent Mission of CAR	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
31	Central African Rep	Mrs. Bernadette Farmale	Counsellor	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
32	Congo	Mr. Raymond S. Balé	Ambassador	repercaf.ny@gmail.com
33	Congo	Ms. Jacqueline L. Mikolo	Health Minister	Msp.jlmikolo@gmail.com
34	Congo	Mr. Jean Vivien Mombouli	Health Advisor	momboulijv@gmail.com
35	Congo	Dr. Benjamin Atipo	Health Advisor	atipobenjamin65@gmail.com
36	Congo	Dr. Cécile Mapapa	Programme Director	mapapacecile@gmail.com
37	Congo	Dr. Franck H. O. Okombi	Health Advisor	franckokemba@gmail.com

N°	Country	Name	Title	E-mail
38	Congo	Mr. Michel Mongo	General Secretary Foundation C.A	Michel.mongo@orange.fr
39	Congo	Mrs. Christine I. Balé	Minister Counsellor	congo@un.int
40	Cote d'Ivoire	Gen. Yao Adjoumani	Military Adviser	bertine.ci.onu@gmail.com
41	Cote d'Ivoire	Mr. Ibrahima Toure	Counselor	bertine.ci.onu@gmail.com
42	Cote d'Ivoire	Mr. Joseph Gbrou	Permanent Mission of Cote d'Ivoire	jogbrou@yahoo.fr
43	DRC	Ms. Safou Chantal Lopusa	Ministre du Genre et de la famille	safouchantal@hotmail.com
44	DRC	Ms. Kazal A Marie-Claude	Conseillère en genre	claudekazal@yahoo.fr
45	DRC	Ms. Kitanu M.L- Marie	Coordon et PF of the ICWLWHA	laurekitanu@gmail.com
46	DRC	Ms. RUGAMIKA A. ANNIE	Coordon ONG ASPLC /GOMA	asplcgomank@gmail.com
47	DRC	Mrs. Charlotte O. Malenga	Permanent Mission of DRC	missiondrc@gmail.com
48	Ethiopia	Mrs. Haimanot Kebede W.	Permanent Mission of Ethiopia	ethiopia@un.int
49	Ethiopia	Mr. Tekeda Alemu	Ambassador	ethiopia@un.int
50	Ethiopia	Mr. Demeke M. Tsidu	Military Adviser	ethiopia@un.int
51	Ethiopia	Mrs. Mahlet Gebreyesus	Police Adviser	ethiopia@un.int
52	Gambia	Mr. Mamadu Tangara	Ambassador	gambia_un@hotmail.com
53	Gambia	Mr. Amadou Jaiteh	Military Adviser	gambia_un@hotmail.com
54	Gambia	Mr. Lamin Faati	Police Adviser	gambia_un@hotmail.com
55	Gambia	Ms. Della M. King	Permanent Mission of Gambia	gambia_un@hotmail.com
56	Equatorial Guinee	Mr. Anatolio N. Mba	Ambassador	info@equatorialguineaun.org
57	Equatorial Guinee	Mr. Domingo Mituy Alene	Military Adviser	info@equatorialguineaun.org
58	Equatorial Guinee	Mr. Domingo N. Mangué	Police Adviser	info@equatorialguineaun.org
59	Haiti	Ms. Martine MOISE	First Lady	martine.moise@president.ht
60	Haiti	Mrs. Olney Trevelyan Daly	Permanent Mission of Haiti	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
61	Haiti	Mr. Denis Regis	Ambassador Extraordinary	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
62	Haiti	Mr. Jean Baptiste R. Leroy	Minister Counsellor	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
63	Haiti	Mr. Patrick Saint-Hilaire	Minister Counsellor	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
64	Haiti	Mrs. Astride Nazaire	Political Adviser	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
65	Haiti	Ms. Marie B. Narcisse-	Permanent Mission of Haiti	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
66	Haiti	Mrs. Marie C. Louis-Astin	Minister Counsellor	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
67	Haiti	Mr. Willy Louis	Minister Counsellor	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
68	Haiti	Ms. Daphné Lafontant	First Secretary	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
69	Haiti	Mrs. Tatiana L.-Michaud	Permanent Mission of Haiti	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
70	Haiti	Mr. Paul Alliance	Minister Counsellor	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
71	Haiti	Mr. Frédéric Riche	Permanent Mission of Haiti	mphonu.newyork@diplomatie.ht
72	Malawi	Mr. Atupele Muluzi	Minister of Health & Population	muluziatupele@gmail.com
73	Malawi	Dr. Dan Namarika	Secretary of Health & Population	danamarika@gmail.com
74	Malawi	Ms. Loyce Merrick	Permanent Mission of Malawi	MalawiNewyork@aol.com

N°	Country	Name	Title	E-mail
75	Malawi	Dr. Jean Kalilani	Minister for Gender	MalawiNewyork@aol.com
76	Niger	Mr. Abdallah Wafy	UN Ambassador	lailatino@yahoo.com
77	Niger	Mr. Ayouba Hassane	President CAEC	lailatino@yahoo.com
78	Niger	Dr. Idi Illiassou Mainassara	Ministre de la Sante Publique	lailatino@yahoo.com
79	Niger	Mr. Daouda M. Marthe	Ministre de l'Enseignement	lailatino@yahoo.com
80	Niger	Mme. Leila Tino	Permanent Mission of Niger	lailatino@yahoo.com
81	Nigeria	Prof. Isaac Adewole	Minister of Health	ifadewole@yahoo.co.uk
82	Nigeria	Mrs. Zainab Ahmed	Minister of State for Budget	ahmedzainab16@hotmail.com
83	Nigeria	Dr. Sani Aliyu	DG, National Agency (NACA)	Sanialiyu1@gmail.com
84	Nigeria	Ms. Lidwine Meffo	Permanent Mission of Nigeria	permny@nigeriaunmission.org
85	Nigeria	Dr. Ayode Alakija	Chief Humanitarian Coordinator	Yodi.alakija@gmail.com
86	Nigeria	Mr. Samson Itegboje	Deputy Permanent Representative	permny@nigeriaunmission.org
87	Nigeria	Gen. Solomon Udounwa	Military Adviser	permny@nigeriaunmission.org
88	Nigeria	Mr. Abdulkadir Hamzat	Police Adviser	permny@nigeriaunmission.org
89	Nigeria	Mr. Sylvester Ogogo	Deputy Defense Adviser	permny@nigeriaunmission.org
90	Panama	Mrs. Lorena C. de Varela	First Lady	dcedeno@panama-un.org
91	Panama	Mrs. Ana Mae Castillo	Director of Private Assistance	dcedeno@panama-un.org
92	Panama	Dr. Cesar Gantes,	Ministry of Health	dcedeno@panama-un.org
93	Panama	Mrs. Desirée Cedeño R.	Permanent Mission of Panama	dcedeno@panama-un.org
94	Panama	Ms. Isbeth Murcia	Deputy Permanent	dcedeno@panama-un.org
95	Sierra Leone	Mrs. Vicky Mumie Jusu	Military Adviser	sierraleone@un.int
96	Sierra Leone	Mr. Saidu Nallo	Minister Counsellor	sierraleone@un.int
97	Sierra Leone	Dr. Alpha Tejan Wurie	Minister of Health	sierraleone@un.int
98	Sierra Leone	Dr. Momody Sesay	NAS Director General	sierraleone@un.int
99	South Soudan	Dr. Riek Gai Kok-	Minister of Health	info@rssun-nyc.org
100	South Soudan	Dr. Esterina N. Nyilok	Chairperson	info@rssun-nyc.org
101	South Soudan	Brig. Gen Peter A. Paliu	Chief Medical service	info@rssun-nyc.org
102	South Soudan	Brig. Gen Yohanna Majok	Director HIV	info@rssun-nyc.org
103	South Soudan	Dr. Acol Dor	Coord. of 100 day Right to Health C	info@rssun-nyc.org
104	South Soudan	Ms. Riya William Yuyada,	EXD. Director Crown de Woman	info@rssun-nyc.org
105	South Soudan	Ms. Jane Alphonse	CSO Representative- Deputy Chair	info@rssun-nyc.org
106	South Soudan	Mrs. Nawal A. M. Ahmed	Permanent Mission of South Sudan	sudan@sudanmission.org
107	Uganda	Mr. Sam Kutesa	Minister of Foreign Affairs	emailarthur.kafeero@mofa.go.ug
108	Uganda	King Rukirabasajja Rukidi	Kingdom of Tooro	jbagumaug@yahoo.com
109	Uganda	Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng	Minister of Health	emailester244@yahoo.com
110	Uganda	Ms. Annet Kabuye	Permanent Mission of Uganda	admin@ugandaunmy.com
111	Uganda	Mr. Moses Engadu	Technical Advisor	moses@kingoyo.africa

N°	Country	Name	Title	E-mail
112	Senegal	Mrs. Aichetou Sow	Counsellor	senegal.mission@yahoo.fr
113	Senegal	Mr. Abdoulaye Barro	Minister Counsellor	senegal.mission@yahoo.fr
114	Senegal	Mr. Barthelemy Diouf	Military Adviser	senegal.mission@yahoo.fr
115	Tanzania,	Mr. George M. Itang'are	Military Adviser	tanzania@un.int
116	Tanzania	Mr. Khamis A. Othman	Police Adviser	tanzania@un.int
117	Togo	Mr. John F. Lamega	Legal Adviser	Fintakpajohn20@gmail.com
118	Togo	Mr. Essohanam Petchezi	Administrator	togo@un.int
119	Togo	Col. Wiyaoth Blakimwe Balli	Military Adviser	togo@un.int
120	Togo	Mr. Dekalega F. Lamega	Counsellor	togo@un.int
121	Togo	Mr. Ptangme Peketi	Adviser	togo@un.int
122	USA	Dr. Bernadette Ludwig	Prof. & Dept Chair of Sociology	bernadette.ludwig@wagner.edu
123	USA	Ms. Enase Nigatu	Student	enase.nigatu@wagner.edu
124	USA	Ms. Madia Sirleaf	Student	madia.sirleaf@wagner.edu
125	USA	Ms. Jodie Bonhometre	Student	jodie.bonhometre@wagner.edu
126	USA	Ms. Dove Sinclair	Student	dove.sinclair@wagner.edu
127	USA	Ms. Deyja Gentile	Student	deyja.gentile@wagner.edu
128	USA	Ms. Qamar M.N.M Ayoub	Student	qmohammad.ayoub@wagner.edu
129	USA	Ms. Evelin C. Omana	Student	ecaballero.omana@wagner.edu
130	USA	Ms. Sarah Cartmell	Student	sarah.cartmell@wagner.edu
131	USA	Ms. Mahina Taglies	Student	mahina.taglies@wagner.edu
132	USA	Ms. Gabriella Cowlan	Student	gabriella.cowlan@wagner.edu
133	USA	Ms. Charnaé Payne	Student	charnae.payne@wagner.edu
134	USA	Ms. Caida Davis	Student	caida.davis@wagner.edu
135	USA	Ms. Karen Martin	Student	karen.martin@wagner.edu
136	USA	Ms. Amanda Akaliza	Student	amanda.akaliza@wagner.edu
137	USA	Ms. Chalice Averett	Auditor	csummer@yahoo.com
138	USA	Mr. Abdoul Aziz Ndiaye	Advocate	azybanks7@gmail.com
139	USA	Ms. Jennifer G. Brumakine	Programme Manager	jbrumskine@gmail.com
140	USA	Ms. Michelle Roller	Co-Chair	jbrumskine@gmail.com
141	USA	Mr. Emmanuel Okeke	Professor	chuhart04@yahoo.com
142	USA	Mr. Herbert Odunukwe	Professor	chuhart04@yahoo.com
143	USA	Rev. Karen Jackson	Director	karen_jackson@projecthospitalit.org
144	USA	Mr. Ousmane Diallo	Program Director	tdia868@aol.com
145	USA	Ms. Kim Nichols	Executive Director	kimn@africanservices.org
146	USA	Mr. Bakary Tandia	Program Director	bakarit@africanservices.org
147	USA	Ms. Diane Armeth	Executive Director	diane.arneth@chasininy.org
148	USA	Mr. Les Hayden	Vice President	les.hayden@chasiny.edu

N°	Country	Name	Title	E-mail
149	USA	Ms. Sharon Jensen	Associate Director	sharon.jensen@chasiny.org
150	USA	Ms. Jennifer Sherwood	Policy Associate	jennifer.sherwood@amfar.org
151	USA	Mr. Mohammed A-Nimer	Teacher	abunimer@american.edu
152	USA	Mr. Dame Babou	President	dame@africac.1.com
153	USA	Ms. Adama Fassah	CEO	adama@nepalaNYC.org
154	USA	Ms. Bonnie Pollak	Professor	bonnie.pollak@yu.edu
155	USA	Ms. Daniel F. Wozniak	Dean	danielle.wozniak@yu.edu
156	USA	Ms. Elizabeth Denhoff	Director	elizabeth.denhoff@yu.edu
157	USA	Mr. Jarret Schecter	Team Leader	mabinetadabo@yahoo.fr
158	USA	Ms. Isseu Ndao	Case Manager	mabinetadabo@yahoo.fr
159	USA	Ms. Mame Bineta Dabo	Health Educator	mabinetadabo@yahoo.fr
160	USA	Ms. Adja Alima Seye	CPA	alima.seye@hotmail.com
162	USA	Mr. James Lenton	Director Refugee Youth Program	james.Lenton@theIRC.org
163	USA	Mr. Duane Felton	Attorney	dcfinsurance@gmail.com
164	USA	Ms. Jacqueline Ramos	Office Manager	ramosj@nyassembly.gov
165	USA	Ms. Christina Xu	Nurse	christinaxunyc@gmail.com
166	USA	Mr. Elder Moses Teah	Founder/President	iic.org2008@yahoo.com
167	USA	Ms. Sherifat Folarin	Program Director	sfolarin@sautiyetu.org
168	USA	Mr. Neil Barry	SI Vice Chair	neil@shnintl.org
169	USA	Mr. Michael De Cillis	Attorney	mdecillis@gmail.com
170	USA	Ms. Shelley Horwitz	Assistant Dean	shelley.horwitz@stonybrook.edu
171	USA	Mr. Eugen D. Kollie	Community Leader	dakartetax@yahoo.com
172	USA	Mr. Walter James Weah	Director of Asset Management	waltersweah@preservationdp.com
173	USA	Mr. Rev. James Bestman	CEO Board Chair	watchainbest@yahoo.com
174	USA	Ms. Donna Jungries	Chairwoman of the Board	foreverjunge@comcost.net
175	USA	Ms. Elissa Montani	Founder and Director	elissa@gmrfchildren.org
176	USA	Mr. Jean louis Flateau	Professor	jflatmec.cuny.edu
177	USA	Mr. Augustine Okereke	Senior VP & Provost	augokereke@mec.cuny.edu
178	USA	Ms. Eleine Reed	Professor	ereid@mec.cuny.edu
179	USA	Mr. Bobby Digi Olisa	Advocate	bobby@islandvoice.org
180	USA	Mr. Cheikh Ndiaye	Student	ndiayecheikhjob@gmail.com
181	USA	Mr. Benjamin Okeke	Professor	chuhart04@yahoo.com
182	USA	Mr. Frederik Stefani	Executive Director	fstefani@migrationusa.org
183	USA	Rev. Christopher R. Birstlet	Author/Speaker	cbirstler@gmail.com
184	USA	Ms. Jane Ikezi	Advocate	cmp@princewillproperties.org
185	USA	Chief. Mpaka Princewill	Chair/CEO	cmp@princewillproperties.org
186	USA	Rabbi Bob Kaplan	Director	kaplanb@jrcrny.org

N°	Country	Name	Title	E-mail
187	USA	Mr. Omar Vaid	Community Advocate	contact@omarvaid.com
188	USA	Rev. John McBeth	Community Advocate	occupytheblocksiny@gmail.com
189	USA	Ms. Jazmin Rivera	Program Manager	jazmin@sipcw.org
190	USA	Ms. Kathleen Kennedy	Director of Gov. Strategic Part	kathy@sipcw.org
191	USA	Mr. Moustapha Dioum	Board Member	taphdioum@gmail.com
192	USA	Mr. Daouda Fall Sar	Board Member	dfsarr@hotmail.com
193	USA	Mr. Abdel Kader Haireche	Expert	ahaireche@yahoo.com
194	Niger	Mr. Moulaye Z.M. Ali	Conseiller Special	nigerminafet@live.fr
195	Niger	Mr. Abou Al Housseini	PV/VIH	nigerminafet@live.fr
196	Niger	Mr. Ibrahim Hassan	Coalition Prise en Charge STOP TB	nigerminafet@live.fr
197	Niger	Dr. Aboubacar Baille	PNLS Ministère de la Sante	nigerminafet@live.fr
198	Niger	Ms. Ndiaye Cherifatou	Chef de Canton de Tessaoua	nigerminafet@live.fr
199	Niger	Issoufa Ado	Presse	nigerminafet@live.fr
200	Niger	Mr. Ibrahim M. Oumarou	Security	nigerminafet@live.fr
201	Niger	Mr. Samadou Ousman	Second Counsellor	nigerminafet@live.fr
202	Niger	Mrs. Mariama Aldiouma	Administrator	nigerminafet@live.fr
203	Netherlands	Excellency Sigrid Kaag,	Minister of Foreign Trade	nyv@minbuza.nl
204	Netherlands	Mr. Adriaan Beenen	Permanent Mission of Netherlands	nyv@minbuza.nl
205	Netherlands	Mr. Emile Petrus Gregoire	Deputy Ambassador	nyv@minbuza.nl
206	Netherlands	Mr. Hein-Jan Keijzer	Policy Officer	nyv@minbuza.nl
207	Netherlands	Colonel Piet Van Egmond	Military Adviser	nyv@minbuza.nl
208	Netherlands	Mr. Frits Kemperman	Spokesperson	nyv@minbuza.nl
209	United Kingdom	Mrs. Claire Louise Meakin	Military Adviser	nyv@minbuza.nl
210	United Kingdom	Lt. Col. Andrew R. A. Higgs	Police Adviser	nyv@minbuza.nl
211	United Kingdom	Mr. Richard Peter Meakin	Permanent Mission of UK	uk@un.int
212	United Kingdom	Mr. Jeremy John McGee	Counsellor	uk@un.int
213	Zambia	Mr. Lazarous Kapambwe	Ambassador	zambia@un.int
214	Zambia	Mrs. B.L Ntembeni Mwewa	Military Adviser	zambia@un.int
215	Zambia	Brig. Gen. Erick Mwewa	Police Adviser	zambia@un.int
216	Zimbabwe	Mr. Frederick Shava	Ambassador	zimnewyork@gmail.com
217	Zimbabwe	Mrs. Barbara Kadyautumbe	Military Adviser	zimnewyork@gmail.com
218	IFRC	Mr. El. Hadj As Sy	President IFRC	Elhadj.sy@ifrc.org
219	IFRC	Mr. Lasha Gogvadze	Senior Adviser	Lasha.gogvadze@ifrc.org
220	IFRC	Dorrottya Patko	Special Assistant	Dorrottya.patko@ifrc.org
221	ICRC	Ms. Veronique Christory	Adviser	newyork@icrc.org
222	ICRC	Mr. Charles Sabga	Deputy Head of Delegation	newyork@icrc.org
223	PEPFAR	Ambassador Deborah Bix	US Global AIDS Coordinator	birxd@pepfar.gov

N°	Country	Name	Title	E-mail
224	PEPFAR	Ms. Angela Acherekar	Deputy Coordinator	acherekara@pepfar.gov
225	UNAIDS	Mr. Michel Sidibe	Executive Director	sidibem@unaids.org
226	UNAIDS	Mr. Mamadi Diakite	Special Adviser	diakitem@unaids.org
227	UNAIDS	Mr. Simon Bland	Director NY Office	blands@unaids.org
228	UNAIDS	Ms. Clemence Bare	Director AU, Addis Ababa	barrec@unaids.org
229	UNAIDS	Ms. Laetitia Bosio	Policy and Strategy Officer	bosiol@unaids.org
230	UNAIDS	Mr. Sophie Barton-Knott	Communications Manager	bartonknotts@unaids.org
231	UNAIDS	Mr. Mahesh Mahalingam	Director Communication	mahalingamm@un.org
232	UNAIDS	Ms. Sihaka Tsemo	Regional Fast Track Adviser	tsemos@unaids.org
233	UNAIDS	Ms. Marine Davtyan	Senior Adviser	davtyanm@unaids.org
234	UNAIDS	Mr. Abou Sy	Consultant	diasa74@hotmail.com
235	UNAIDS	Ms. Annemarie Hou	Chief of Staff	houa@unaids.org
236	UNAIDS	Mr. Gary Jones	Senior Adviser	JonesG@unaids.org
237	UNAIDS	Ms. Diana Ramos P.	Special Assistant	portocarrerod@unaids.org
238	UNAIDS	Mr. Partow, Jaleel	Senior Adviser	partowj@unaids.org
239	UNAIDS	Mr. Varughese, Ninan	Senior Adviser	VarugheseN@unaids.org
240	UNAIDS	Ms. Archana Sood	Operations Officer	sooda@unaids.org
241	UNAIDS	Ms. Editha Buhain	Assistant	buhaine@unaids.org
242	UNAIDS	Ms. Rosemary Museminali Kobusingye	Director, External and Donor Relations	museminaliR@unaids.org
243	UNAIDS	Ms. Regan Hofmann	Washington Liaison Office	hofmannr@unaids.org
244	UNAIDS	Mr. Marc Saba	UNAIDS Country Director	
245	UA	Mr. Smail Chergui	AU Peace and Security Commissioner	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
246	UA	Ms. Fatima Mohammed	Ambassador Permanent Observer	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
247	UA	Mr. Abdelkader Araoua	Senior Political Officer	AbdelkaderA@africa-union.org
248	UA	Mr. Salem M. Matug	Political Affairs Officer	matugs@africa-union.org
249	UA	Ms. Louise Sharene Bailey	Senior Political Officer	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
250	UA	Mr. Ayoup Zaid Elrashdi	Political Affairs Officer	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
251	UA	Ms. Puseletso A. Molato	Economic and Social Affairs	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
252	UA	Mr. Zinurine Abiodu Alghali	Chief Policy Development Unit	alghaliz@africa-union.org
253	UA	Mrs. Mirriam Gauvin	Special Assistant	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
254	UA	Mr. Didier Gauvin	Administrator	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
255	UA	Dr. Marie-Goretti Harakeye	Head of Division HIV/AIDS, TB	harakeyem@africa-union.org
256	UA	Mr. Calixte Mbari	Head, Democracy	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
257	UA	Ms. Marie G. Harakeye	Chief of Social Affairs Commission	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
258	UA	Ms. Minata S. Cessouma	AU Commissioner for Political Affairs	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
259	UA	Mr. Idris Latreche	Political Affairs Officer	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
260	UA	H.E. Mrs. Amira ElFadil	Commissioner for Social Affairs	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org

N°	Country	Name	Title	E-mail
261	UA	Prof. Lebatt	strategic advisor	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
262	UA	Dr. Kambudzi A. Mupoki	Acting Director	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
263	UA	Mr Fred N. Gateretse	Head of Division	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
264	UA	Boitshoko Mokgatlhe	Head, Sudan & South Sudan Desk	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
265	UA	Mr. Guy Cyrille Tapoko,	Head of Unit	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
266	UA	Olabisi Dare	Head of Division	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
267	UA	Idris Latreche	Senior Officer	AU-NewYork@africa-union.org
268	ECOWAS	Mr. Tanou Koné	Permanent Observer	ecowasmission.ny@gmail.com
269	ECOWAS	Mrs. Hawafyli Tanou	Special Assistant	ecowasmission.ny@gmail.com
270	UNHQ	Ms. Bience Gawanas	United Nations SRSG	gawanas@un.org
271	UNHQ	Ms. Ndidi Anyaegbunam	Special Assistant	Anyaegbunam@un.org
272	UNHQ	Ms. Bintou Keita	ASG DPKO	b.keita@un.org
273	UNHQ	Ms. Ina Heusgen	Office of the Chief of Staff	Ina.heusgen@un.org
274	UNHQ	Ms. Pramilla Patten	SRSG CRSV	patten@un.org
275	UNHQ	Mr. Siva Methil	Training Officer	sivam@un.org
276	UNHQ	Ms. Jane Connors	ASG Victims Rights Advocate	jane.connors@un.org
277	UNHQ	Ms. Ann M. Syauta	Human Rights Advocate	syauta@un.org
278	UNHQ	Ms. Fatim Dam	Special Assistant	dam@un.org
279	UNHQ	Ms. Lynne Erica Goldberg	Political Officer	goldbergl@un.org
280	UNHQ	Ms. Nancy Austin	Political Officer	austin2@un.org
281	UNHQ	Ms. Elizabeth Rolando	Chief O/USG-DFS	rolando@un.org
282	UNHQ	Mr. Trey Watkins	Office of the SG	watkinsk@un.org
283	UNHQ	Ms. Boezio Geraldine	Public Information Officer	Geraldine.boezio@un.org
284	UNHQ	Mr. Tun Khine	Policy Adviser	khinet@un.org
285	UNHQ	Mr. Tonderai Chikuhwa	Chief of Staff	chikuhwa@un.org
286	UNHQ	Ms. Marianne Bauer	Team Leader	bauerm@un.org
287	UNHQ	Mr. Kaorou Okuizumi	CRSV Officer	Okuizumi@un.org
288	UNHQ	Ms. Letitia Anderson	CRSV Officer	andersonl@un.org
289	UNHQ	Ms. Beth Asher	CDU Senior Officer	asherb@un.org
290	UNHQ	Ms. Ojeda	Medical Officer	ojeda@un.org
291	UNHQ	Ms. Ann Schive Vikens	Security Council Affairs Division	viken@un.org
292	UNHQ	Mr. Samuel Gahigi	Team Leader	gahigis@un.org
293	UNHQ	Mr. Elizabeth Rolando	Chief DFS	rolandoe@un.org
294	UNHQ	Mr. General Carlos Loitey	Chief of DPKO Troops	Loitey@un.org
295	UNHQ	Ms. Kathleen O'Shea	Assistant Chief of DPKO Troops	O'Shea@un.org
296	UNHQ	Ms. Mehrin Sharif	PBPS	Sharifm@un.org
297	UNDP	Mr. Ahoutou F. Konangui	UNDP PBS	kenechukwu.esom@undp.org

N°	Country	Name	Title	E-mail
298	UNDP	Ms. Cristina Bertarelli	Program Analyst	cristina.bertarelli@undp.org;
299	UNDP	Ms. Eva Sáenz de Jubera	Fund Portfolio Manager	eva.saenz@undp.org
300	UNDP	Ms. Hazel Bergantinos	DESA	bergantinos@un.org
301	OIF	Ms. Michaëlle Jean	Directeur General OIF	reper.new-york@francophonie.org
302	OIF	Mrs. Narjes Saidane	Assistante Directeur	reper.new-york@francophonie.org
303	OIF	Mr. Habib Achek	Deputy Adviser	reper.new-york@francophonie.org
304	OIF	Ms. Nelly Mbouale	Managing Assistant	reper.new-york@francophonie.org
305	OIF	Ms. Ange Konan	Administrative Assistant	reper.new-york@francophonie.org
306	UNRWA- NY Office	Ms. Hallamal Kei	Special projects & advocacy	Hallamal.Kei@un.org
307	UNRWA- NY Office	Mr. Andrew McIndoe	Project Analyst	Andrew.McIndoe@un.org
308	UNRWA- NY Office	Mr. Christopher Gunness	Director Advocacy	Christopher.gunness@un.org
309	UNOAU	Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde	SRSO	hassenm@un.org
310	UNOAU	Mme. Maria Hassen	Focal Point	hassenm@un.org
311	TRANSgrediendo	Mr. Daniel Ochoa	Advocate	transgrediendo@outlook.com
312	TRANSgrediendo	Ms. Lorena Borjas	Executive Director (CSO)	transgrediendo@outlook.com
313	International Treatment Preparedness Coalition	Ms. Trisa Taro	ITPC Program Impact Manager	ttaro@itpcglobal.com
314	International Treatment Preparedness Coalition	Ms. Wame Mosime	Director Global Programs	wmosime@itpcglobal.com
315	CHANGE	Ms. Victoria Watson	Research Analyst	watson@genderhealth.org
316	CHANGE	Ms. Anne Betsol	Advocate	abetsol@genderhealth.org
317	OIM	Ms. Anna Eva Radicetti	Senior Policy Humanitarian Affairs	aeradicett@iom.int
318	Bill & Melinda Gates	Mr. Shawn Baker	Director	sbaker@gatesfoundation.org
319	Cepheid	Mr. Phillipe Jacon	Senior VP	phillipej@cepheid.com
320	ActionAid	Mr. Jon Date	Advocacy Officer	Jon.date@actionaid.org

“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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UNAIDS
Joint United Nations
Programme on HIV/AIDS

20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

+41 22 791 3666

unaids.org