



**45<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council**

**Annual discussion on integration of a gender perspective**

BENELUX Intervention

28<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Thank you Madam President,

It is my pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the three Benelux countries, Belgium, the Netherlands and my own country Luxembourg.

Progress for the integration of a gender perspective has been slow and uneven across the globe, and even within this Council. In addition, we are faced with a push back on this issue throughout the work of the Council. The current COVID-19 pandemic is forcing us to critically reflect on our efforts so far: women and girls are experiencing more sexual and gender based violence, groups in marginalized situations are becoming even more stigmatized, women are disproportionately losing their incomes and livelihoods, and girls are facing increased barriers to access education and life-saving sexual and reproductive health services.

In the end, it will be women and girls in all their diversities and especially those in marginalized situations, such as LBQ women, who will be most affected by these attempts. Therefore, we need to fight to ensure that the human rights of **ALL** women and girls are respected and protected.

Please allow me to outline a few much needed improvements that can enhance the work of the Council:

- We must ensure that civil society, especially women's rights organizations and human rights defenders are put at center stage. We need to support them politically and financially, for they play a decisive role in forging

durable change. We also need to listen to their voices in the Human Rights Council at all possible stages.

- We need to promote inter-sectoral cooperation. If we don't step out of our silos, progress will give way to stagnation. Therefore we need to make sure that all the work in the Human Rights Council is analyzed through the gender transformative lens.
- In particular, we need to make sure to respect, protect and fulfill sexual and reproductive rights and health as fundamental human rights.
- We need to adopt a systematic gender reflex, so that when new challenges come up, such as climate change, digitalization and innovation, we automatically take into account and address these challenges in a gender responsive manner.
- Finally we also need to make sure the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council itself acts gender responsively: while hiring, training or promoting their staff and throughout their communications, reports, analyses, recommendations and in carrying out any other aspects of their mandate

Thank you, Madam President.