

## **Concept note on an Art Exhibition on Mental Health in Crisis: Surviving and Thriving**

**October 29<sup>th</sup> – November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018**

**Opening Night: October 29<sup>th</sup> 6:00 pm**

**Qatar lounge – United Nations Headquarters, New York**

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### **Concept Note**

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Mental health, often forgotten, is becoming a defining issue of our time. Mental health disorders are recognised as a global problem, occasioned by a multiplicity of stressors (e.g., conflict, technology, and the fast pace of modern life) and stigma associated with seeking help for mental health support (in some countries).

Mental health disorders, just like physical health disorders, come in a variety of forms. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2018) estimates that about 300 million people are affected by depression worldwide, characterised mostly by loss of interest, guilt, low- self-worth, disturbed sleep, tiredness, sadness, etc., and about 23 million people are affected by schizophrenia and other psychoses; more severe and characterised by distortions in sense of self, perception, emotions, language, thinking and behaviour. Mental health and behavioural problems are primary drivers of disability worldwide, with over 40 million 20 – 29-year olds thus disabled (Lozano, 2012). Despite the growing global mental health awareness, many countries and cultures still discriminate against the mentally challenged, with stigmatization that is often transgenerational.

In many parts of the world, individuals with mental health challenges often have to struggle not only with the symptoms of the disorder, but also to exist and function amidst prejudice, discrimination and stigma, which is also sometimes extended to their kin. In conflict and fragile settings, the situation is worse. Trauma and extreme violence often borne by women and girls cause irreparable mental health issues which, when not properly treated, distort the fabric of societies in which they live in.

The Secretary-General launched the Mental Health Strategy for staff of the UN to address psychosocial well-being and mental health within the workplace.

Therefore, there exists a need to continue to build awareness, share knowledge and encourage governments to build health systems that support mental health and well-being.

It is in this light that the governments of Qatar and Nigeria, together with UNFPA and the NEEM Foundation, wish to host an art exhibition and awareness talk on the issue of mental health.

The evening will feature paintings and photographs illustrating mental health issues in conflict and fragile settings and a talk on the broader issue.

**Date:** 29 October 2018

**Time:** 6:00 pm

**Venue:** Qatar Lounge, UNHQ

**Audience:** This event will gather members of the UN community, civil society, youth, NGO representatives and Government officials.

**Program**

A proposed program includes:

- Welcome by moderator- Ms. Elizabeth Nyamayaro, Senior Advisor to Under-Secretary-General & Executive Director UN Women
- Introduction and stage-setting (9 minutes total – 3 min each):
  - Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar;
  - Permanent Representative of Nigeria;
  - Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA, Laura Londen;
- UNFPA Video on response to support Chibok girls (2-3 min)
- Talk on Mental Health (10 minutes total):
  - Mr. Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA Representative
  - Ms. Martha Helena Lopez, ASG Department of Management
  - Expert from NEEM Foundation.
- Closing.