Concept Note
High-Level Side Event on the Margin of the 73rd Session of the General Assembly:
Accelerating Efforts to Eliminate Child Marriage in Africa by 2030
26 September 2018, 1:15 -2:30PM
Venue: Conference Room 9, United Nations Head Quarters, New York

Background and Purpose
Across Africa, 125 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday. These child brides face both immediate and lifelong consequences including early childbearing, lower levels of education, less earning potential and a higher risk of domestic violence. The response from the African Union has been decisive. The continental body has established a strong pan-African policy and normative framework for ending child marriage including:

- The African Common Position on Ending Child Marriage
- The Joint ACHPR-ACERWC General Comment on Child Marriage
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- The Maputo Protocol on Women’s Rights

In addition, a continent-wide Campaign to End Child Marriage is also yielding results. Today, 24 countries across the continent have launched campaigns to end child marriage and most member states have legislation, policies and programmes to end child marriage.

Additional efforts through the leadership of member states include Zambia co-sponsoring with Canada the first UN General Assembly resolution on child, early and forced marriage in September 2014. The two countries co-sponsored another resolution on the issue at the UN General Assembly’s 71st session in 2016. In November 2015, Zambia co-hosted the first-ever African Girls’ Summit on Ending Child Marriage. At programme level, donors such as the Canadian Government (Global Affairs, Canada), the Dutch Government, UK AID and the European Union are partnering with the UN to implement multi-country programmes such as UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage and the Spotlight Initiative. Innovative partnerships have resulted in the Global Partnership to End Child Marriage through Girls Not Brides which convenes more than 1000 civil society organizations committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential.

The diversity of contexts in which child, early and forced marriage occurs has been recognized and attention to specific settings has been increased, notably humanitarian settings and armed conflict. The Human Rights Council dedicated resolution 35/16 of June 2017 to the issue of child, early and forced marriage in humanitarian settings, noting that the practice is highly exacerbated in those settings and urging States to develop and implement holistic, comprehensive and coordinated responses, strategies and policies to prevent, respond to and eliminate child, early and forced marriage.

Our collective progress to reduce the child marriage on the continent is however still too slow. At the current rate, it will take at least a century to eliminate the practice and nearly half of all child brides will be African by 2050. Accelerating action across the continent is therefore both urgent and necessary to provide millions of girls the opportunity to realize their full potential and a better life. The United Nations System, African Union and partners are convinced that it is possible to accelerate progress towards ending child marriage.
There is also growing evidence that this is possible. For example, Ethiopia, once among the top five countries for child marriage in Africa reduced prevalence by one-third from 60 to 40 percent between 2005 and 2015, and is projected to further reduce child marriage to 20% by 2030 and below 10% by 2050. We are also seeing major progress in Algeria, Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda, Tunisia and Zambia.

It is against this background that the Government of Zambia and the Government of Canada in partnership with UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women will host a High-level Side Event which will provide an opportunity for the global leaders to renew their commitments and accelerate efforts to end child marriage by 2030.

Objectives
The High-level Event aims to create a platform for Heads of State and Governments to dialogue and renew continental efforts to end child, early and forced marriage.

Format and Participation
A one-hour and fifteen minutes interactive High-level Meeting convened by the Government of Zambia and the Government of Canada in partnership with UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women at the margins of the General Assembly. The event will feature Heads of State, the African Union, development partners and United Nations agencies.

Expected Outcomes
- African leadership renews its commitment to implement national strategies which are well-resourced to end child marriage and;
- Renewed partnership to end child marriage in the build up to the second African Girls’ Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa.

Contact
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