



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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# 139<sup>th</sup> IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 14-18.10.2018

## Parity debate

### Ensuring that children enjoy their rights and grow up protected from violence

Organized by the Forum of Women Parliamentarians  
Wednesday, 17 October 2018, 9.00 to 10.30 a.m.  
Room 2, level 0, CIGG

#### Concept note

The Forum of Women Parliamentarians will organize in Geneva its fourth parity debate. One of the aims of the debate is to foster dialogue between women and men at the IPU and encourage them to debate issues of common interest together.

Having an equal number of men and women speak in the debate will allow the different and complementary views and experiences of both genders to emerge. It will also help ensure that gender equality concerns are mainstreamed into the discussion. Delegations are therefore invited to be represented in this debate by male and female participants.

The debate will be moderated by a member of parliament who will ask panellists a series of key questions before seeking the participants' views. There will be no formal list of speakers; participants will be asked to request the floor simply by raising their hand. In the spirit of interactive debate, prepared speeches are strongly discouraged. In line with the principle of a parity debate, the composition of the panel will be gender balanced, as will the order of speakers invited to intervene from the floor.

As we celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there is a need to focus on the rights of children—the future generation and living force of all countries on the planet.

While important progress has been made to ensure that girls and boys are active rights holders, too many of them still endure violence or are at risk of experiencing it across all stages of their childhood and in diverse settings.

Nowhere in the world are there safe places for children. Children can experience violence in their homes, schools, care institutions, communities, over the Internet, etc. Children struggling with poverty, unequal access to education, no civil status, hunger, homelessness, migration, etc., are more vulnerable to all forms of violence. Among many others such is also the case of the 158 million school-age children and adolescents (6 to 17 years) who live in the 24 countries and areas affected by armed conflict.<sup>1</sup>

The violence can take many forms—physical, sexual and emotional—such as homicide, violent discipline, including corporal punishment, forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts. According to UNICEF, in 2012 alone, homicide took the lives of about 95,000 children and adolescents under the age of 20—almost 1 in 5 of all homicide victims that year. Around 6 in 10 children between the ages of 2 and 14 worldwide (almost a billion) are subjected to physical punishment by their caregivers on a regular basis. Close to 1 in 3 students between the ages of 13 and 15 worldwide reported involvement in one or more physical fights in the past year or having experienced bullying on a regular basis.<sup>2</sup> Children also face other forms of violence—including sexual exploitation and trafficking, child labour, as well as harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting.

<sup>1</sup> [data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VAC-Brochure-FINAL-10-31-17.pdf](http://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VAC-Brochure-FINAL-10-31-17.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2014, *Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children*, [www.unicef.org/publications/files/Hidden\\_in\\_plain\\_sight\\_statistical\\_analysis\\_Summary\\_EN\\_2\\_Sept\\_2014.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Hidden_in_plain_sight_statistical_analysis_Summary_EN_2_Sept_2014.pdf)

Girls and boys often suffer from different forms of violence and are affected by it in different ways. Although girls and boys are at risk of sexual violence at any age, girls become particularly vulnerable after puberty. Surveys indicate that last year 9 million girls aged 15 to 19 in the world were forced into sexual intercourse or other sexual acts. Harmful practices also disproportionately affect girls. Worldwide, almost 750 million women and girls alive today were married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and at least 200 million women and girls underwent female genital mutilation.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the global homicide rate is four times higher among adolescent boys than among girls. Adolescent boys are much more likely to be killed by strangers whereas almost half of the female homicide victims are killed by family members or intimate partners compared to about 6 per cent of males.<sup>4</sup> Such gendered patterns should be taken into account by policymakers in order to effectively protect girls and boys from violence and respond to their specific needs.

The consequences of this violence are enormous. It robs childhood, puts health at risk, disrupts education, hinders children's development and opportunities for empowerment, and increases the risk of exposure to further violence in adulthood. Beyond the tragic impact on children themselves and their families, violence against girls and boys carries also serious economic and social costs in both lost potential and reduced productivity.

Yet, many forms of violence against children remain socially and culturally acceptable. They are often seen or rationalized as necessary or inevitable. Weak laws and policies fail to protect girls and boys who are often too young or too vulnerable to disclose their experience or to protect themselves. Child protection services are also often unavailable or inadequate. All of this requires adequate legislative reform, development of policies, budgetary allocations and a transformation of cultures and mentalities.

Members of parliament—both women and men—will be invited to discuss and identify solutions to the following key questions to be debated:

- What are the different forms of violence against children? Are they the same for girls and boys? How does violence affect girls and boys differently?
- What are the main challenges identified by MPs to achieve progress in putting an end to violence against girls and boys?
- How can the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development be used by MPs to provide girls and boys a childhood free from violence and efficiently protect girls and boys from all forms of violence? What tools, skills and knowledge do parliamentarians
- How does a gender perspective contribute to these efforts and enhance results? What concrete steps has your parliament taken to review legislation, policies and budgets on ending violence against children from a gender perspective? What are the results and benefits of such an approach?
- How can parliaments work with other partners to ensure the active involvement of men and boys in strategies to prevent and respond to violence, including gender-based violence, against children? What good practices have been taken in this regard?

**Panellists:**

- Mr. Owain James, Global Campaign Director at the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation
- Ms. Anya Gass, who is Girls Advocacy Alliance Officer at Plan International Office in Geneva
- Ms. Jeanne d'Arc Gakuba, Vice-President of the Rwandan Senate and Member of IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians
  
- Mr. Habibe Millat, Member of Parliament from Bangladesh

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<sup>3</sup> [www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures](http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures)  
<sup>4</sup> [data.unicef.org/topic/adolescents/violence](http://data.unicef.org/topic/adolescents/violence)