

Media Statement: First UN International Day of the Girl Child

Commemoration and Launch of New Report on Harmful Practices

11 October 2012

Statement

On this first-ever UN International Day of the Girl Child, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children joins the global community in calling for urgent action to end all forms of violence, discrimination, and harmful practices against girls.

Every year, an estimated 10 million girls are married before they reach 18. In the most appalling cases, girls as young as eight years old are being married to men who may be three or four times their age. Girls who are forced to marry face a life of violence in the home, are denied education and opportunity, and suffer severe harm to their health and well-being.

Key Messages

- Child marriage, female genital mutilation, and other harmful practices constitute serious violations of children's rights
- Legal prohibition alone is insufficient — social norms change requires sustained community engagement
- Girls must be empowered through education, information, and support systems
- States must ensure effective reporting and response mechanisms for girls at risk

Call to Action

The SRSG calls on all Member States to ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, repeal laws that permit child marriage, and invest in community-based programmes that protect and empower girls.