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135th IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 23 – 27.10.2016

Forum of Women Parliamentarians

Panel debate on *Securing the rights and future of women and girls during war and conflict*

Sunday, 23 October 2016
2.30 – 4.30 p.m., Room 2, level 0, CICG

Background: The rights inherent to all humans have long been affirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These rights are universal, interdependent and indivisible. War and conflict cannot be used as a reason to diminish or suspend the application of those rights: they must be applied at all times, everywhere and to everyone. Women and girls in particular cannot continue to be left behind and considered as casualties of war. In times of conflict and war, they must be able to continue to enjoy their rights and to be agents of change. Fulfilling that imperative remains a major challenge, as the gender-based discrimination and violence that often prevail in peacetime are exacerbated during conflict. Girls, and young women in particular, are too often prevented from accessing basic services and education due to societal, economic and security challenges. This hampers their future and further exposes them to sexual violence, trafficking and child marriage.* Nearly 250 million children currently live in countries affected by conflict and an additional 10 million are refugees, mainly in neighbouring countries. A refugee child is five times more likely to be out of school than a non-refugee child. Girls are particularly disadvantaged, being 2.5 times more likely to be out of school in countries affected by conflict, as compared to boys. The time has come to take all necessary steps to change the situation and prevent an entire generation from being lost to conflict and war.

Participants in the debate will address the following questions:

- How can women's and girls' basic rights to education and health be ensured during conflict, including in displacement and refugee settings?
- What measures have proved effective in protecting women and girls from violence, harmful practices, trafficking and exploitation in conflict-affected areas?
- Have educational programmes in conflict, displacement and post-conflict settings proved effective in building more gender-equal and peaceful societies?
- How can post-conflict reconstruction efforts best be designed to empower women and girls and to facilitate their social, educational and economic reintegration?

Expected outcome: The discussion will allow parliamentarians to draw on best practices used to ensure that women and girls affected by conflict have access to health, education and empowerment, and are protected from violence, harmful practices, trafficking and exploitation.

Format: During the interactive debate, panellists will make introductory remarks. Participants will then exchange views, questions and answers.

*Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), General Recommendation n°30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/GC/30&Lang=en

