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Ministry of Employment
Gender Equality Division

Sweden's response to the Secretary-General of the United Nations relating to the implementation of the General Assembly resolution:

- Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation (A/RES/73/149)

REFERENCE: UNW/2020/0002

Introduction

In November 2016, the Swedish government introduced a national 10-year strategy on preventing and combating men's violence against women, which includes forced marriage and violence and oppression in the name of honour. The strategy was drafted with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (also known as the Istanbul Convention) as an important point of reference. It consists of four objectives, a clear organisation for implementation and an action plan for the years 2017-2020. So far, the Swedish government has allocated more than 1,6 billion Swedish Crowns for the implementation of the action plan.

Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation
(A/RES/73/149)

- *Measures for the elimination of female genital mutilation, as per resolution 73/149, including:*
 - *Most recent data on FGM prevalence, including, if available, among immigrant and refugee populations, and information on root causes and factors contributing to the practice.*

In 2012, the National Board of Health and Welfare estimated that approximately 38 000 girls and women in Sweden had been subjected to female genital mutilation. Around 7 400 of them were under the age of 18. Approximately 19 000 girls were estimated to be in a risk population where their guardians have a positive or ambivalent attitude towards female genital mutilation, even after migration. Since 2012, the number of people in Sweden with a foreign background has increased, including from the areas where female genital mutilation is commonly practised on girls and women. This means that the current number is probably higher than the previous estimate of 38 000. Only a few of those who have experienced FGM seek medical treatment, but the numbers have risen every year since 2012. In 2018, 1 110 women and girls consulted treatment.

- *Measures taken to protect women and girls from FGM, including when the practice occurs outside the country of residence.*

FGM is prohibited in Sweden since 1982. Since 1999, it also prohibited to have FGM performed in another country, even if it is legal there.

On 23 January 2020, the Government presented a bill to the Parliament (Riksdag) proposing to abolish the statute of limitations for rape, gross rape and female genital mutilation if the crime was committed against a person who had not attained 18 years of age. This will also apply to crimes committed before the change of the legislation but at that time were not statute-barred. The bill also proposes that the minimum punishment for gross child pornography offence should be raised from six months to one year of imprisonment. The new legislation took effect on 1 May 2020.

On 24 March 2020, the Government presented a bill to the Parliament (Riksdag) proposing a travel ban on leaving the country for children at risk of being taken abroad to enter into marriage or be subjected to genital mutilation.

- *The role of stakeholders in eliminating the practice of FGM, including of: traditional leaders; faith-based and religious institutions; families and communities; youth; men and boys; grassroots and women's organizations; as well as health sector workers, particularly their ability to prevent FGM, including medicalization, and manage FGM complications.*

Stakeholders such as civil society and religious institutions have important roles in changing the attitudes to the practice of FGM. For example, civil society organisations arrange group meetings where victims and those in risk of becoming victims get to socialize and converse. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency has been commissioned to identify and map out effective ways to work with changing attitudes regarding FGM and to share those with relevant actors. The agency is working closely with the civil society and has also involved the Swedish Agency for Support for Faith Communities.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has been commissioned to identify which health care women and girls subjected to FGM are receiving in different parts of Sweden, and to propose how the health care can be more effective and equal. The National Board of Health and Welfare has also been commissioned to supply social services and the health care sector with education and knowledge about honour related violence, including FGM.

The Swedish Migration Agency has developed manuals to support the handling of cases involving violence or trafficking in human beings, as well as online training on honour-related violence and oppression and on trafficking in human beings.

- *Impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in regards to FGM and measures undertaken to address those it in the short, medium and long-term, particularly in the following areas:*

- *Potential new at-risk populations.*

The Government sees no new at-risk populations specifically regarding FGM due to the Covid-19 outbreak. However, women and men, boys and girls who are subjected to honour-related violence or oppression are in a particularly

vulnerable situation which is enhanced by the outbreak and there might be even more barriers than usually to seek treatment.

- *Delivery of essential support services for survivors.*

See answer above regarding the extra funding to civil society and to the Swedish Gender Equality Agency.