



CAIRO + FIVE DECLARATION

ENDING FGM BY OUTLAWING IT ONCE AND FOR ALL: A GOAL WE CAN ACHIEVE

15 DECEMBER 2008

We, the participants, at the High Level Meeting on the “Cairo Declaration on FGM +5”, organised on 14-15 December 2008 in Cairo, Egypt, by the Egyptian National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) and No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), under the patronage of H.E. Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt, representatives of governments, parliaments, civil society from the Afro- Arab countries affected by FGM as well as international and regional organisations and other governments, parliaments and civil society:

Emphasising the historic significance of the Cairo Conference “Afro-Arab Expert Consultation on Legal Tools for the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation” of 21-23 June 2003 and its final outcome document, the “Cairo Declaration”, which contributed to breaking the taboo around the issue through strengthening the stance of anti-FGM advocates, as well as partnerships between governments, civil society and international organisations, fostered a sustainable network among new and existing partners and systematically underscored, for the first time, the crucial importance of adequate anti-FGM legislation as a tool in the fight against FGM;

Recognising the positive developments occurring after the Cairo Declaration, including the adoption of the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, the presentation of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Study on Violence Against Children, the adoption by many participating countries of anti-FGM legislation including Egypt, the creation of National Action Plans on combating FGM, the creation of independent national human rights bodies and ombudsman positions, monitoring mechanisms including telephone help-lines, the development of new and emerging initiatives by international organisations, and strengthened more coherent advocacy initiatives;

Welcoming the opportunity provided by this High-Level Meeting to undertake a systematic review of progress achieved and challenges encountered in realising the goal of the eradication of FGM and to strengthen and accelerate the global movement conducive to the eradication of FGM as a violation of the rights of girls and women;

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Reiterating the determination expressed in the Cairo Declaration that the prevention and abandonment of FGM can be achieved only through adopting a comprehensive approach anchored within a human rights framework that promotes behaviour change, using legislative measures as a pivotal tool;

Taking note of the positive developments that have been achieved in many countries, as evidenced by the testimony of many of the speakers, while *recognising* that many challenges are still outstanding and that accelerated concerted action is still needed to achieve further progress in all countries, as well as at the regional and global level;

Commending the work done together by the organisers of this High Level Meeting, namely the NCCM and the NPWJ, and *saluting* the commitment and determination of H.E. Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt, as well as Her keynote speech, and the remarks delivered by H.E. Mrs. Chantal Compaoré, and their specific contribution to the success of this High Level Meeting;

Recognising the important contribution made by the many partners who worked together on the initiative to convene this High Level Meeting in Cairo, with a view to assessing progress made and agreeing on a common strategy to overcome outstanding obstacles and *applauding* the constructive work we have each done to achieve the eradication of FGM;

Acknowledging the commitment demonstrated by the participants from government, civil society and international organizations evidenced by the high level participation and the quality of the debate, as well as the commitment and shift of the media approach in covering the deliberations transparently thus media related to FGM moves away from a controversial political arena to a human rights context.

Hereby adopt the “Cairo Plus Five Declaration” as follows:

1. *We recognise* that over the past five years, our good work done at national, regional and international levels and the momentum that begun with the Cairo Declaration of 2003 contributed to the pivotal shift in the way that FGM is conceptualised and approached, away from a social, health or religious issue to a human rights violation that needs to be addressed within a human rights framework. However, additional accelerated efforts and resources are needed to consolidate these gains and to embed FGM within a human rights framework, so as to recognise the true nature of the practice and to provide the maximum possible protection for girls and women who are victims and/or at risk.
2. *We consider*, as was clearly demonstrated during the discussions throughout the High-Level Meeting, that an emerging and critical issue in the fight against FGM is the



increasing cross-border human migration which added to the regional aspect of the practice an increased global dimension, as people from countries that suffer from FGM wish to continue subjugating their girls to the practice when they settle in other countries. This emerging issue needs to be tackled at the local, national, regional and global levels using a comprehensive and multidisciplinary human rights approach and in a way that is consistent and coherent, supported by adequate systematic international cooperation.

3. *We endorse* the recommendations made in thematic session 1 on FGM Legislation as a Tool for Behavioural Change and emphasise, in particular, that legislation is both a reflection of society and has a role to play in leading society towards changing behaviour, FGM should not be defended under the guise of “culture” or “tradition”, but should explicitly be treated as a human rights violation. We launch an appeal to outlaw FGM in all its forms at the local level, in national legislation and through any appropriate regional and international instruments. Adequate rights-based legislation is a pre-requisite for outlawing FGM entirely, with a view to its total eradication. Such legislation should provide an accurate definition of the crime of FGM, an adequate penalty that reflects the gravity of the crime and should be sufficiently precise as to the scope of individuals covered by the law.

4. *We endorse* the recommendations made in thematic session 2 on Reaching the FGM Communities: the Role of Outreach, Public Information and Media Campaigns and stress, in particular, that the media has a critical role to play in informing communities, and specific target groups within communities, about the basic facts related to FGM, engaging them in discussions to challenge historical attitudes and persuading them that FGM is harmful to the best interests of their children. We urge that use be made of new and existing technologies that allow individuals to engage in interactive two-way communication with individuals and communities other than their immediate families and that participation of victims, particularly children, be encouraged.

5. *We endorse* the recommendations made in session 3 on Measuring Success: Sharing Knowledge Useful in Understanding Trends on FGM and stress, in particular, that since recent strategies for eliminating FGM focus on changing communities' perceptions of women's rights, the indicators and measures used for evaluating the success of anti-FGM projects must undergo a similar reorientation away from medical indicators towards ones that can express changes in societal attitudes and behaviours. Dissemination and endorsement of a culture conducive to the respect and fulfilment of human rights is a pre-requisite towards that end.

6. *We believe* that a follow-up conference in 12 months will be important to continue the assessment of implementation of these recommendations and all other efforts to address FGM as a human rights violation, including a consideration of basic minimum standards required for effective anti-FGM legislation. Thus, we suggest that consultations begin at a broad level with countries where there is a high prevalence of



FGM and with other relevant actors, with a view to determining a possible host for that conference.

We, the participants,

7. hereby attest to that, building on the breakthrough achieved in 2003, significant progress has been made: with this declaration we present our call for accelerated action. We have to keep the momentum and redouble our efforts, so that ending FGM by outlawing it once and for all is not only a goal we can achieve, it is a goal that we will achieve.