

# JOINT COMMUNIQUE between the United Nations and European Union on the launch of the Spotlight Initiative – to eliminate violence against women and girls

Today more than ever, when the world is facing countless challenges, we – the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) – want to strengthen and build on our strategic partnership. We believe in effective multilateralism, and a global order based on rules, agreed together and respected by all. We are firmly committed to promoting peace, human rights and sustainable development, and other shared values and principles.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us with an unprecedented opportunity for progress, with its 17 Goals (SDGs) as an integrated set of common imperatives. This global framework is reinforced by the new European Consensus on Development. Building on this strategic partnership, today we stand together to reaffirm our resolute and unwavering commitment to gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.

The promotion of gender equality, enjoyment of human rights by all as well as women's and girls' empowerment, are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. Not only through the stand-alone SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peaceful societies, but also as a cross-cutting element central to the achievement of all 17 SDGs.

Translating our firm commitment into concrete action, it is with great pride and a shared sense of responsibility that we are launching today the Spotlight Initiative – focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) to make a real and lasting difference for millions of women and girls all over the world.

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VAWG is one of the most widespread and devastating human rights violations across the globe. It affects all societies, cutting across generational, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries. It is estimated that 35% of women have experienced violence at some point in their lives. This figure is as high as 70% in some countries. This scourge is a barrier to gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment and overall sustainable development, and an impediment to the achievement of the SDGs. Global and continuous engagement is therefore required in all countries and regions to overcome it.

To deliver on this urgent priority, the UN and the EU will bring together our comparative advantages by pooling capacities, resources, expertise and

current efforts. We will engage in a renewed policy dialogue with partner countries and organisations around the world. A financial envelope in the order of EUR 500 million – with the EU as the principal contributor at this stage – will support our targeted actions over the next few years. To scale up and broaden its reach, we invite other donors to join this initiative.

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The Spotlight Initiative aims at achieving transformational change at the regional level, concentrating our efforts in Asia, the Pacific region, Africa (particularly Sub-Saharan Africa), Latin America and the Caribbean. Guided by evidence, we will focus strategically on the most prevalent forms of VAWG in different regions, including sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices; specific forms of domestic and family violence; femicide; trafficking in human beings; and economic (labour) exploitation.

Consistent with the principles of the 2030 Agenda, the Spotlight Initiative will apply a rights-based approach, and give particular attention to the most marginalised women and girls in order to “leave no-one behind”.

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We – the UN and the EU – will continue to work tirelessly around the world, and in all fora, to empower women and girls, defend their rights, strengthen their voice, and ensure their safety and full control over their own bodies and their own destinies, while motivating others, including governments and civil society organisations, to partner with us in this important endeavour.

The Spotlight Initiative provides a unique and unprecedented opportunity for all of our partners to help us collectively step up our efforts to combat VAWG, promote gender equality and build a safer, fairer and more sustainable world for all.