

UN Human Rights Council 48: UK statement for the annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective

Thank you, Madam President.

The United Kingdom welcomes this annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.

We convene today as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to significantly impact women's and girls' rights around the world. Women and girls have been at greater risk of gender-based violence, including online violence, unintended pregnancy, forced marriage and dropping out of or falling behind in education.

Unfortunately, inequality and discrimination are at the root of so many of these challenges. The continuation of gendered norms and discriminatory social norms underpin the lack of progress towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women worldwide.

Gender equality must also be at the centre of our efforts to adapt and build resilience against climate change. It is women and girls who are most affected by water scarcity and who face higher mortality risks during climate-related disasters. Their empowerment and participation is therefore essential.

The UK is committed to achieving gender equality and addressing the barriers faced by women and girls. We will continue to champion 12 years of quality education for all girls, for sexual and reproductive health and rights and to end gender-based violence. The Human Rights Council has a key role to play in galvanising the international community to achieve these objectives.

Enabling and improving access to digital resources and information can also provide solutions many of the issues women and girls face. In low- and middle-income countries women are 15% less likely than men to access mobile internet.

The UK Government is therefore committed to supporting programmes that enhance digital literacy for girls, digital activism and increase gender inclusion through digital technology. We will continue to work with our G7 partners to achieve our critical targets for Girls' Education by continuing to support innovative financing mechanisms that reduce the gender digital divide and improve the provision of technology to enable distance learning. Such solutions could unlock the potential of millions of girls.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the digital sphere is therefore

critical.

Madam President,

What does the panel see as the most important measure to help close the digital gender gap?