

Leaders in Ending Child Marriage

Statement of commitment to end the practice of child marriage

We, as Ministers, recognize that child marriage in our countries and around the world continues to violate the rights of millions of girls each year, and we vow to lead the change by accelerating the effort to eliminate the practice of child marriage in our respective countries.

The problem requires urgent action: 640 million of the world's women and girls were married as children and the practice continues today. Girls who marry in childhood receive less education; are vulnerable to the risks of early pregnancy; and begin to take on the adult roles of wives and mothers before their time. When girls become brides before they can decide for themselves, this limits their agency and autonomy and seriously undermines their well-being and ability to reach their full potential.

The harm, already unacceptable in the case of each individual girl, is perpetuated across societies and generations, as child marriage contributes to higher fertility and population growth; limits productivity and earnings; and adversely impacts child and maternal health.

In 2015, Governments across the world committed to eliminating harmful practices, including child, early, and forced marriage, by 2030, as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. **As Ministers, on behalf of our Governments, we renew our commitment to ending the practice of child marriage.** We issue this statement as world leaders convene for the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly, looking towards the final years of accelerated action on the 2030 Agenda.

Our commitment is part of what we hope will become a global movement to bring urgent action to effectively eliminate this harmful practice entirely. We repeat the January 2023 pledge by the Governments of Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, published in *The Lancet* as 'Towards a world with no child marriage: four countries pledge action.' We follow the lead of these four countries – home to one fifth of the world's child brides – who committed to the targeted, multisectoral interventions necessary to accelerate progress on this urgent issue.

**We renew our commitment to ending the practice of child marriage.
On behalf of our Governments, we pledge:**

First, we will strive to make economic growth inclusive and to reach poor communities, including those affected by climate change and humanitarian crises. To this effect, we will boost investments that foster productivity in employment-intensive sectors, such as agriculture, and policies that improve conditions for workers in the informal economy. We will also promote gender-responsive social assistance. Social protection schemes that comprise focused relief to families through cash and in-kind transfers have been successful in keeping girls in school and delaying child marriage, with positive long-term implications for girls' agency and life opportunities.

Second, we will pursue active, inclusive labour market policies that emphasise decent work for women. Families who know that girls will be able to secure good jobs with a reasonable and stable income are more likely to keep them in school. We will also support programmes and policies that recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work, a burden that falls disproportionately on girls and women and compromises their right to education, economic independence, and personal development.

Third, we will invest in quality, universally available and accessible secondary education that builds higher-level skills among girls, instils a distinct sense of personal worth and agency, and facilitates their successful transition to employment.

Fourth, for girls who have already become brides, we will scale up explicit measures to support and empower them, such as through opportunities to continue education, and access to quality health care and protection services.

Fifth, across all our efforts to prevent child marriage, we will tackle harmful gender roles, norms, and power relations. All child marriage interventions, whether to prevent or respond to the practice, should deliberately open doors for girls to gain empowerment and autonomy.

Source: 'Towards a world with no child marriage: four countries pledge action', Comment in *The Lancet*, 31 January 2023

Beyond the halfway point set for the Sustainable Development Goals, as the world reflects on progress made and further action needed, we acknowledge the role that we must all play in honouring these commitments – including the commitment to end child marriage. Our vision is a world without child marriage, where every girl has a chance to realize her rights and fulfil her potential – bringing more equitable, creative, and prosperous societies for all.

Signed:

2023 Signatories

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Republic of Indonesia

Hon. Darija Kisić Tepavčević

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