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34th regular session of the Human Rights Council –27 February to 24 March 2017

Panel: “Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity as a human rights priority for all States, including in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

Joint Oral Statement¹

“Preventable Maternal Mortality and Morbidity and the implementation of the Right to Development”

Mr/Madame Chair,

This is a joint oral statement on behalf of APG23 and other 11 co-signing NGOs.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda represents a great opportunity to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity in the world.

According to the World Health Organisation, approximately 830 women die every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth and 99% of these deaths occur in the developing countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia².

In such resource-limited countries, maternal mortality has been attributed mostly to the “3 delays”³: the delay in deciding to seek care on the part of the mother, family, or community not recognizing a life-threatening condition, the delay in reaching care in time due to road conditions, lack of transportation, or location, and the delay in receiving adequate treatment because of weak and inadequate health services.

The first delay reveals how important is education in families and communities, the second reveals how important is to address the development inequities existing within a country between urban and rural areas and the link existing between maternal mortality and eradication of extreme poverty and inequities and the third delay reveals how it is necessary the strengthening of health systems.

A human rights based approach in the implementation of SDGs is key, but we would like to emphasize that, without addressing in a broader and holistic vision the root causes of high maternal mortality and morbidity, it will be difficult, especially in developing countries, to achieve target 3.1 of SDG 3. In our opinion, such a vision is comprehensively provided by the declaration on the right to development that, in fact, inspired the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this regard, we would like to ask the distinguished panellists: “don’t you think that the implementation of the right to development, meant to create an enabling national and international environment to development, will be crucial for strengthening health services especially in the developing countries, and will impact on the social determinants of health that greatly influence maternal mortality and morbidity?”

Finally, we invite all Member States to overcome the political impasse on the right to development and start implementing it. This will be, in our opinion, a concrete action for preventing maternal mortality and morbidity.

Thank You

¹ The Magdalene Institute, NGO not accredited to ECOSOC, joins this oral statement.

² World Health Organisation fact sheet on Maternal Mortality updated to November 2016

³ Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Applying the lessons of maternal mortality reduction to global emergency health -Emilie J Calvello a, Alexander P Skog a, Andrea G Tenner b & Lee A Wallis, published online: 16 March 2015

