

**“Addressing Violence Against Women:
Health Impacts and the Role of the Health Sector”**

Side event at the 66th World Health Assembly

**Statement adopted by Governments of Belgium, India, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway,
United States of America, Zambia**

This event marks the beginning of a process through which we, as Member States, build on our progress toward eliminating the global epidemic of violence against women and girls by ensuring that WHO provides full and proper attention to this issue in the years to come.

Violence against women and girls is a major global public health, gender equality and human rights challenge, touching every country and every part of society. While most often physical or sexual, it also has significant short and long-term behavioral, mental, and reproductive health consequences. Redressing gender inequality, one of the key factors associated with violence against women and girls, will remain central to our prevention strategies.

Different forms of violence are interrelated. They have shared underlying causes and risk factors and often multiple forms of interpersonal violence—child maltreatment, youth violence, and elder maltreatment—take place concurrently. There are long-term intergenerational consequences for those who witness violence, especially children, resulting in negative repercussions for their health, development and wellbeing. Violence also has serious social and economic consequences for the society as a whole.

We recognize that WHO’s work to date has been fundamental in highlighting the magnitude of and outlining the factors associated with the global scourge of violence against women and girls. The health sector has a key role to play in preventing and responding to the problem, as part of a robust multi-sectoral approach that engages governments and civil society, on the local, national and international level. WHO’s leadership has also been central to ensuring that the public health approach to violence prevention more broadly is widely understood and being acted on by increasing numbers of countries. We call upon all UN agencies involved, such as UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA and the human rights mechanisms, to join forces and to coordinate their efforts in ending violence against women and girls. But there is more to be done.

We come together today to show our collective commitment to addressing interpersonal violence through the further strengthening of WHO's capacity to address this important health issue, particularly for women and girls. Our shared goal is to propose an agenda item for the 67th World Health Assembly.

By doing so, we’ll demonstrate to the millions of people, families and communities around the world affected by the epidemic of violence that they deserve that freedom and security.