



STATEMENT

**World Contraception Day
26 September 2020**

States must ensure access to contraceptives even during COVID-19 pandemic, UN experts say

GENEVA (23 September 2020) – Access to family planning is a human right protected by international law, and States must continue to ensure it even during the COVID-19 pandemic, say UN human rights experts.

Ahead of World Contraception Day on 26 September, the experts* issued the following statement:

“The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on family planning services. Production has been cut and supply chains have been disrupted. Clinics have closed or limited their services, especially in countries with limited resources, and women and adolescent girls cannot get to trained health care providers.

The right to sexual and reproductive health includes women’s freedom to decide whether to be pregnant, how many children to have, and to space pregnancies. It also imposes a core obligation on States to provide the essential medicines of the relevant WHO List which includes contraceptives.

In order to make this a reality, everyone must have access to scientifically based comprehensive sexuality education included in school curricula, as well as timely access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice. This includes unbiased and scientifically based information, the opportunity to make an informed decision, options for counselling, modern short- and long-acting contraceptives, and other methods such as emergency contraception.

Restrictions on freedom of movement imposed to combat the pandemic must not prevent anyone from getting the information that they need and timely access to health care facilities. These provide vital services like screening and managing sexually transmitted infections, support to victims of sexual violence or rape, safe abortions, as well as condoms for men and women or other forms of family planning.

It is especially important to ensure access for those in vulnerable situations or historically subjected to discrimination, such as adolescent girls, migrant women,

women with disabilities, urban, slum dwellers, refugees, LGBT and gender diverse persons and communities, and women in the postpartum period.

Choice and access to family planning are central to individual reproductive autonomy and for attaining the UN's Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality and health and well-being – particularly those aimed at ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health rights and reducing maternal mortality.

If we want to avoid maternal deaths, it is essential to prevent unwanted pregnancies through access to contraception, safe abortion services, and quality post-abortion care. Ahead of the International Safe Abortion Day on 28 September, [last year's statement by Special Procedures Mandates Holders](#) stands ever valid.

On the World Contraception Day (26 September) and the International Safe Abortion Day (28 September), we call on States to perform their important role to ensure increased access to quality modern methods of family planning, stigma-free services and evidence-based information. This is part of their obligations under the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.”

ENDS

*** The experts: Tlaleng Mofokeng, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; members of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls: Elizabeth Broderick (Chair), Melissa Upreti (Vice Chair), Alda Facio, Ivana Radačić, and Meskerem Geset Techane; Dubravka Simonovic, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.**

The Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

For more information and media requests, please contact: *Lucía de la Sierra* (+ 41 22 917 9741 [/ldelasierra@ohchr.org](mailto:ldelasierra@ohchr.org))

For media inquiries related to other UN independent experts: *Jeremy Laurence – Media Unit* (+ 41 22 917 9383 / jlaurence@ohchr.org)

Follow news related to the UN's independent human rights experts on Twitter @UN_SPExperts.

Concerned about the world we live in?
Then STAND UP for someone's rights today.
#Standup4humanrights and visit the web page at <http://www.standup4humanrights.org>