

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Good morning Your Excellency Luis Almagro Lemes, Secretary General of the Organization; Mr. Néstor Méndez, Assistant Secretary General; distinguished heads of delegation, representatives of civil society, special guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I have the honor to address you as a spokesperson for the Coalition on Sexual and Reproductive Rights to raise some concerns and recommendations for your consideration.

At the 70th anniversary of the Organization of American States, as well as the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, we take ownership of the principles established in the Charter of the OAS. We emphasize that democracy is not possible without justice, and respect for freedom and peace. We demand that States realize their obligation to respect human rights in an equal manner, without discrimination, embracing the diversity that characterizes our continent.

We highlight the obligations of Member States to protect, and guarantee the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights of all people, with a special focus on those who are most vulnerable to gender-based violence, femicide and sexual violence; and that includes human rights defenders and the fight against impunity. These are minimum requirements to achieve sustainable development and comply with the obligations they have acquired in regional and international human rights treaties, the 2030 Agenda and the Montevideo Consensus.

Absolute and partial legal prohibitions on safe abortion services are discriminatory and violate fundamental human rights of women and their families, which profoundly affects their lives, health and freedom. Instead of limiting or criminalizing health services, States must review and modify their legal frameworks in order to guarantee women's access to legal, accessible, safe, free and respectful services. We need solutions that improve the ability of women and girls to make free and informed decisions, based on science and best practices, and their individual circumstances.

States must take urgent measures to abate the high rates of gender-based violence, especially the sexual violence suffered by women and girls in Central America, migrants in detention center and on the border with the United States, and victims of natural disasters and humanitarian crises. Recognizing that the serious phenomenon of sexual violence is the most important cause of forced pregnancy, especially in those under 15 years of age, Member States must guarantee health care, which implies the design and implementation of health care protocols, access to emergency oral contraception, antiretrovirals, antibiotics and abortion.

States must face the economic and social consequences of forced maternity; for example, the social costs resulting from lack of access to education, decent housing, formal work, and social security, among others.

Education is a fundamental right in every democracy, and comprehensive sexuality education is an essential pillar upon which to build equal gender relations, free from violence, coercion and discrimination, which contribute to a more tolerant and sustainable society.

In our region, human rights defenders face an unprecedented risk of threats, violent attacks and even homicides, which go unpunished. The member states have an obligation to guarantee a life free of

violence for defenders of women's rights, the environment, LGBTI rights, abortion providers and journalists.

It is important that States eliminate discriminatory laws throughout the Americas. In particular, they must eliminate the laws that criminalize homosexuality, bisexuality and the transgender population, which is currently the case in 9 Caribbean countries. Likewise, laws that criminalize people living with HIV, sex workers and women who need abortion services, especially in countries where the most restrictive laws exist, with penalties ranging from 30 to 40 years in prison, must be reviewed and eliminated.

Finally, we urge the member states to renew, promote and strengthen the commitment and political will to gender equality, and the empowerment of women, which must be linked to reproductive autonomy and the right to decide without prejudice, without violence and without discrimination, in order to build more just, more humane and more inclusive societies.

Women's lives matter too.

Thank you very much.