



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

13 April 2020

Excellency,

I would like to sincerely thank you for your joint letter dated 8 April 2020 supporting my global call for peace in the home as we address the COVID-19 pandemic. I understand that the initial list of 124 signatories has grown further in the days since this letter was sent. Your rapid mobilization and strong response is a clear indication of our shared conviction. As we face this global public health crisis we must prevent the upsurge of yet another crisis – that of violence against women and girls.

I was especially heartened to read your commitment to the integration of gender-based violence prevention and response in all national and global COVID-19 responses.

Now is the time to turn these commitments into concrete actions. To support this, last week I issued a dedicated policy brief on the impacts of COVID-19 on women which includes recommended actions and highlights innovative responses already in place by some Member States. These recommendations also include: an earmarking of funds in national COVID-19 response plans; designating domestic violence shelters as essential services; using hotels and other spaces to supplement shelters; shifting reporting, legal aid, and support services online; scaling up awareness-raising campaigns; and providing referral pathways for reporting violence in essential spaces, such as pharmacies and grocery stores. It is also important to ensure that these efforts reach those who may be particularly at risk during this time, including women and girls living with disabilities, female refugees and migrants, out-of-school girls and elderly women.


All Permanent Representatives of
Member States to the United Nations
New York

Women are at the frontline of both the health pandemic and prevention of violence efforts and are critical to the effectiveness of any response. This includes women's right organizations which are often first responders in a crisis and are essential to sustaining development gains. Ensuring sustainable investment in these organizations will be critical through the crisis and recovery period. The United Nations is supporting these efforts with dedicated investments through the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund and the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and Girls.

The United Nations stands ready to support your efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. One platform through which we are doing this is the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative. Through this Initiative, we are working with our Resident Coordinators in more than 25 countries across five regions to support a greater shift to online services and awareness raising, scale up investment in civil society, and provide tools for peer support. We are also working with partners to make this a global platform, to attract scaled-up investment for a greater number of countries, and to connect countries and regions, thus allowing them to share practices and lessons throughout this period.

I look forward to our continued collaboration during these troubled times. Together we can ensure that we emerge from this crisis stronger, having protected those at risk and having strengthened the achievement of our shared global goals.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

with my warmest personal regards


António Guterres