



Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice
Salesiane di Don Bosco
Mary Help of Christians Preprovince - AES
Addis Ababa - Ethiopia

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Speaker: Beatrice Sala

Oral statement submitted by
IIMA – Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice

And co-signed by
VIDES International – International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development

With the support of
Salesian Sisters in Ethiopia

Thank you, Mr. President.

IIMA and VIDES commend the constructive participation of Ethiopia in its fourth UPR. We welcome Ethiopia's acceptance of recommendation 58.290¹ to strengthen the juvenile justice system. However, we remain deeply concerned that the minimum age of criminal responsibility is nine years old. We urge Ethiopia to take immediate steps to align its laws with international standards to ensure adequate protection of children in conflict with the law.

On the **right to education**, we encourage Ethiopia to effectively implement recommendations 58.67, 58.190, and 58.315² to intensify human rights education programmes, improve access to quality education, particularly for vulnerable children such as girls, children with disabilities, children in street situations and those who are internally displaced. These children often face serious discrimination and systemic barriers to learning.

¹ Recommendation 58.290: Strengthen the juvenile justice system to ensure its full compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Mali). See Report of the UPR Working Group, UN Document A/HRC/58/15, 18 December 2024.

² Recommendations 58.67: Intensify human rights education and training programmes, placing emphasis on gender equality, the rights of the child and other persons in situations of vulnerability (Philippines); 58.190: Continue efforts to improve access to education and high-quality teaching, especially for vulnerable groups, including girls and children with disabilities (Cameroon); 58.315: Undertake additional efforts to help improve the livelihoods of displaced persons, including through facilitating their access to education (Japan). See Report of the UPR Working Group, UN Document A/HRC/58/15, 18 December 2024.

We also appreciate Ethiopia's support for recommendation 58.295³ to raise awareness on birth registration, which remains one of the lowest in the world.

As to the **rights of women and girls**, we remain deeply concerned about the prevalence of **early marriages** and **female genital mutilation**. While welcoming acceptance of recommendations 58.246, 58.278, and 58.284⁴, we regret that Ethiopia only partially supported recommendation 58.146⁵, as the law continues to allow underage marriage, under exceptional circumstances. Additionally, we are concerned that Ethiopia has merely taken note of recommendations 58.260, 58.261, and 58.265⁶ on criminalizing marital rape and combating domestic violence.

We call on Ethiopia to fully implement these recommendations in order to strengthen legal protection for children and women against all forms of violence and discrimination.

Thank you.

³ Recommendation 58.295: Intensify awareness-raising efforts regarding birth registration and address the requirement for the presence of both parents during the process (South Africa). See Report of the UPR Working Group, UN Document A/HRC/58/15, 18 December 2024.

⁴ Recommendations 58.246: Take measures to ensure full equality between women and men, both in the public and the private spheres, guarantee respect for women's rights, and put an end to early marriage and female genital mutilation (France); 58.278: Continue measures to combat discriminatory practices against women and girls, including gender- and ethnicity-based violence (India); 58.284: Adopt measures to ensure access to justice and medical and psychosocial assistance for victims of sexual and gender-based violence (Mexico). See Report of the UPR Working Group, UN Document A/HRC/58/15, 18 December 2024.

⁵ Recommendation 58.146: Set the legal age for marriage at 18 years and ensure the implementation of existing legal provisions that protect children, including the ban on female genital mutilation (Iceland). See Report of the UPR Working Group, UN Document A/HRC/58/15, 18 December 2024.

⁶ Recommendations 58.260: Amend the Criminal Code to explicitly criminalize marital rape (Denmark); 58.261: Criminalize marital rape (Montenegro); 58.265: Take effective measures towards the eradication of sexual and gender-based violence, including through criminalizing marital rape, and finalizing and implementing the women and peace and security action plan (Germany). See Report of the UPR Working Group, UN Document A/HRC/58/15, 18 December 2024.