**IDM 2020. Panel 4: The role of women in the COVID-19 response and recovery**

**Statement by Norway**

Chair

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic accentuates the 2030 Agenda’s imperative of *leaving no one behind* and our common goal to end all forms of discrimination of women and girls. It is important that we apply a gender perspective in our multilateral and national response to COVID-19. The pandemic affects men and women, boys and girls, differently. Women must thus participate on an equal footing with men when needs and actions to fight the COVID-19 pandemic are defined.

We need to address both the health aspect as well as the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. On Norway’s initiative the UN Secretary-General launched a multi-partner trust fund to assist developing countries in responding to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. National measures and financial incentives must respond to women's particular needs, situation in the labour market and their role in the community and family.

Education is a priority for Norway. Education for girls promotes gender equality, better health and more inclusive economic growth. UNESCO estimates that more than 11 million girls are at risk of not returning to school in 2020. Norway is deeply concerned about how school closure is related to an increased risk of early pregnancies, early marriage and sexual and gender-based violence. We will continue working with our partners to give girls and boys access to education.

Closed schools and severe economic effects underscores how the pandemic could reverse the progress made over the last 20 years towards ending child labour. Norway has thus strengthened its efforts to combat child labor and other forms of modern slavery.

We know that violence and harmful practices against women and girls increase in crisis. The UN expects that the pandemic will result in 13 million child marriages between 2020 and 2030. Programs to prevent genital mutilation is being delayed due to the pandemic. Girls who are already affected by harmful practices, are at risk of being further marginalized due to poorer access to health care and other services.

Ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights is a high priority for Norway, also in the context of the COVID-19. We thus continue to fund efforts to abolish harmful customs, to protect against sexual and gender-based violence and to provide access to sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian crises.

I thank you.