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**Statement by Mama Fatima Singhateh  
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**52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council**

**Agenda Item 3**

**8 March 2023**

**Geneva**



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*Mr President,*  
*Excellencies,*  
*Distinguished delegates,*

It is an honour for me to address the Human Rights Council again in my capacity as the UN Special Rapporteur on Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children. At the outset, I would like to thank States, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations, children, members of the academia and other relevant stakeholders who have engaged with me over the past year. I look forward to continued exchanges and cooperation.

I also wish to thank all the stakeholders who responded to my call for input for their valuable contributions, which helped enrich the present thematic report on **Reparation for Child Victims and Survivors of Sale and Sexual Exploitation.**

This thematic study examines the scope and importance of reparation for children who have been affected by sale, sexual exploitation, and abuse both in conflict and non-conflict settings. It consists of an analysis of the overall issue of children's right to reparation and access to justice, current gaps and challenges, and the good practices and experiences of various stakeholders on this issue. It also provides a set of concrete recommendations for States and other stakeholders with a view to contributing towards the design and implementation of national and international frameworks on providing reparation to child victims and survivors of sale and sexual exploitation.

*Mr President,*

I will also be presenting the report of my country visit to Mauritius in June 2022.

*Excellencies,*

While it is not fully possible to return victims to their previous condition before the harm was suffered, reparation is nevertheless a crucial component of meaningful remedy and recovery for child victims and survivors of sale and sexual exploitation.

International human rights law provides for the right of children to reparation for violations of their rights, and the definition of reparation within the ambit of international law is continuously growing, improving, adapting, and adjusting to changing times. Reparative measures, therefore, vary across countries. It can include restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition, which can be symbolic, material, individual or collective in nature. Whatever the form reparation takes, it should be proportional to the gravity of the violations and the harm suffered by the child victims and survivors.

Despite unified commitments under international legal norms and standards on reparative justice measures, only a handful of States have fully operationalized legal and regulatory frameworks, including the adoption of legislation and the implementation of child-friendly services. Gaps continue to exist in many national legislations that hinder child survivors' right to access reparation. These include the absence of provisions for reparations in violations such as child marriage, child labour, child abuse and child exploitation, including those that are sexual in nature.

Other barriers hindering child victims and survivors from claiming or accessing reparation include, limited access to information by child victims on where to seek assistance and advice, and statutes of limitations with narrow applications of the law and strict deadlines. Such barriers deny victims, the opportunity to

come forward and claim reparation when they feel physically and psychologically ready to do so.

Access to justice can also be limited when victims have suffered a crime in another country, or when they are not legal residents of the country in which they are seeking compensation. Additionally, child victims and survivors may choose to avoid going through the legal process to gain access to compensation because they fear risking further stigmatization.

*Mr President,*

There are however examples of good practices that highlight efforts to ensure victims and survivors access much needed reparative schemes and services. Some States have made important attempts and advances at integrating survivor-centred reparation schemes in their legislative frameworks. I cited the Yazidi Survivors Law in my report, as an example that promises a number of reparation measures, which includes financial, medical and psychological support, the provision of land, housing and education, and a quota in public sector employment for communities against whom acts of genocide and crimes against humanity were perpetrated.

The co-creation model of encouraging the participation of child victims and survivors in the process of determining harm suffered and reparation due with a view to restoring dignity, is also a prime example of a good practice worth emulating. Others include the development and implementation of interim relief measures such as that established by The Global Survivors Fund, which provides urgent interim reparative measures in situations where States or other parties are unable or unwilling to provide support to ensure transformative and sustainable impact on the lives of victims and survivors, including children.

I have also elaborated in my report a number of recommendations for the consideration of the governments and other stakeholders. These include the formulation of comprehensive legislation on reparation for child victims and survivors of sale and sexual exploitation, with accountability measures, to ensure that the offences covered in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the first two Optional Protocols, are included in these legislations. It will equally be important to raise awareness on children's rights to reparation.

The implementation and operationalisation of reparative measures can be more effective if governments work with civil society through partnerships and joint funding to provide support services for child victims and survivors.

The provision and financing of urgent interim reparation, including free medical and psychological support, in addition to educational, financial, legal and housing support, for all child victims and survivors, without discrimination is encouraged.

Development partners and the private sector can support reparation through, for example, capacity-building and the mobilization of the information, communication and technology sector to detect and rescue child victims and survivors of online sexual abuse.

It will also be important to intensify multi-agency collaboration to develop and implement age-appropriate, gender and culturally sensitive reparation measures for child victims and survivors to access justice especially those in rural and marginalized communities.

Finally, it will equally be important to enable and provide safe spaces for child victims and survivors to share their experiences and participate in meaningful and sustainable reparation processes.

I would like to now introduce to you some of the main conclusions and recommendations gathered following my country visit to Mauritius from 21 June and 30 June 2022.

I wish to first thank the Government of Mauritius for its availability and spirit of constructive dialogue and cooperation presented before, during and after my visit. My visit came at a unique time, against the backdrop of the recently promulgated legislation on children's rights, which effectively has changed the child protection landscape by creating new and increased responsibilities for virtually all child protection actors. I, therefore, commend the Government of Mauritius for significant efforts made to improve legislation, policies, and practice to protect children from sale and sexual exploitation.

Despite various positive steps, there is a need to urgently address issues such as the growing number of teenage pregnancies within the country, poverty and inequality especially within marginalised communities as well as ensure access to inclusive education for all children. Additionally, there is a need to address the multiple and intersectional discrimination experienced by vulnerable groups of children from Creole background and of African descent, children with disabilities and street children.

With the new child protection framework in place, it would be important to formulate regulations and guidelines on the new responsibilities of various actors in a cohesive and collaborative manner, in order to avoid duplications, and spell out steps and responsibilities at different stages of the prevention and response structure, as well as encourage coordination and information sharing for all child protection actors.

*Mr President,*

The highlights of my visits are always when I meet with and have conversations with children. The children I met in Mauritius, were child rights advocates from across the mainland who exhibited a very good understanding of the issues of sale and sexual exploitation of children. They recognize and have seen the different manifestations of this phenomenon around them, these include sexual harassment by teachers in schools and sexual abuse within circles of trust, and admitted to being reluctant to report, due to the threat of retaliation and fear of being judged. The solutions they proposed include more discussion about sexual abuse and exploitation, including in the online domain, as well as a need for well-trained psychologists in schools to assist children in need. The children also underscored the need to be consulted on and engaged in decisions on matters that affects them.

*Mr President,*

*Excellencies,*

*Distinguished Delegates,*

The foregoing reports were presented in the spirit of constructive engagement and dialogue. With the productive experience garnered, as shared from my visit to Mauritius, may I also take this opportunity to encourage Member States to positively respond to my request for country visit, as these visits form a crucial pillar of enriching my mandate and enhancing continuous dialogue and cooperation with States.

I will take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the cooperation extended to me by the Government of the Philippines during my visit in the last quarter of 2022. I will present the Report of said visit in March 2024. As I prepare for this year's undertakings, I would like to thank the Government of Uruguay for the

invitation extended to me and I look forward to my country visit to Uruguay in May, this year.

I hope to continue the positive engagements with more States in the forthcoming days. I thank you all for your attention and I look forward to a fruitful interactive dialogue with you.

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