THE NETHERLANDS

Comments to the WHO draft Global Plan of Action to strengthen the role of the health system in addressing interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children, second discussion paper containing draft one, August 31, 2015.

The Netherlands welcomes and complements the WHO with the Global Plan of Action to strengthen the role of the health systems within a national multisectoral response to address interpersonal violence in particular against women and girls and against children. It links up to the policy of the Dutch government.

The approach of the Netherlands is an integrated approach to combat all forms of interpersonal violence against people, regardless of gender, age, ethnic background or socio-economic state. Therefore the government works together with among others municipalities, the health care, police and justice, social services, education, NGO’s and volunteers. The plan of the WHO helps to strengthen the effort.

The Plan addresses the issue of interpersonal violence, and in particular violence against women and girls and children, from a multisectoral response angle and builds upon existing and relevant work of the WHO on the ground, thus appropriately reflecting the spirit and ambition of WHA 67.15 Resolution.

With the adoption of the 2030 agenda the fatal omission to include the elimination of violence against women and girls in all its forms in the MDG’s has finally been voided and repaired.

The Netherlands commends the WHO for its continuous, consistent and unremitting attention to the necessity to tackle violence in all its forms, to the plight of the victims, to the need for a comprehensive, cross-sectoral response and to the imperative of prevention.

In particular WHO’s unabated efforts to focus on preventive measures at the global, regional and national levels are of key importance and will gain new momentum with this Global Plan of Action. In order to maximize effective results and impact, the translation of the plan into concrete actions has to be tailored to the specific needs at the national and sub-national levels in close coordination with other UN entities and other relevant partners and with substantial participation of civil society organisations across the full cycle of planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In this respect the Netherlands encourages the WHO, with this GPA, to inspire and mobilize the expertise and capacities of the various UN programs, funds and specialized agencies to further strengthen their collective critical mass to act, prevent and respond to violence in a comprehensive and complementary way, in particular at the country level.

This will also contribute to the process of enhanced UN’s system wide coherence and to the UN’s power to be fit for purpose in the face of the challenges and opportunities to effectively implement the 2030 agenda.
In particular this will allow the WHO to fulfill a leadership role in providing a valuable contribution to strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of the United Nations development system's support to national efforts of developing countries to pursue their priorities and meet their development needs, in compliance with UNGA Resolution 67/226.

The Netherlands would like to call for special attention to the importance to include the facilitation of the establishment, management and financial sustainability of shelter facilities in the GPA programming and implementation process, and to effectively use the momentum triggered by the up-coming 3rd World Conference of Women’s Shelters in The Hague from 3-6 November: http://www.worldshelterconference.org/

The Netherlands especially welcomes the following strong points of the GPA in relation to WHO’s specific roles and responsibilities:

- WHO’s diligent and persevering efforts to keep the need to eliminate violence on the global agenda and the way it applies its scientific expertise and practical skills to overcome the gaps between science, policy and practice in strengthen health systems and their effectiveness of delivery and response;
- The importance WHO attaches to prevention and to cross-sectoral, multi-dimensional approaches to tackle violence;
- WHO’s dedicated efforts to strengthen and invest in health systems across the globe and to focus on the need to tackle the root causes and effects of violence in all its forms in a comprehensive manner.

The Netherlands would like to call upon WHO’s attention to add and further strengthen the following points:

- The rights dimension in relation to the sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- The importance of comprehensive sexuality education;
- The importance of including a post-rape care component including emergency contraception and safe abortion;
- The most important thing is to connect this plan of the WHO together with standing policies international and national, to avoid duplicating efforts, e.g. CEDAW, the Convention of Istanbul and national legislation and policies. This notion should be included in het plan;
- The combat violence against women and girls, and children, requires a holistic approach, including men. Help and support should include the whole system, also to break the intergenerational chain of violence. In addition there should also be an approach to deal with the perpetrators. And last but not least, the role of men/boys in the prevention of violence should be made explicit;
- We strongly urge not to make a separate reporting framework, but connect this framework to the existing reporting obligations of countries (see also under point 1);
- In those countries where GRB has managed to achieve traction, progress and (interim) results, it might be useful to connect the language on budgeting with planning and priority setting and to explicitly include opportunities to apply gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in practice with regard to the gender-health nexus, in particular through intensified cooperation between WHO, UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF;
The need to ensure that products and services related to the elimination of VAWG are included in universal health coverage;

The importance to include the establishment, management and financial sustainability of shelters from violence structures and programs in the programming and budgeting cycles at the national and regional levels;

The importance of not letting momentum slip away and of keeping VAWG on the radar and top of the global, regional and national agenda’s, policies, programs and budgets in the course of the implementation of the 2030 agenda and to ensure mutual accountability from all partners and stakeholders.

The Netherlands thanks the WHO for allowing this open, thorough and inclusive consultation process to happen and looks forward to a fruitful and inspiring discussion amongst member states in November.