

Joint Statement on preventable mortality and morbidity of children under five
General Debate Item 3
19 June 2014

Thank you Mr President.

I have the honour of reading this Statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Kazakhstan, Ireland, Maldives, Mongolia, New Zealand, Paraguay, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tunisia and Uruguay.

We welcome the update provided by the Deputy High Commissioner on the development of technical guidance on a practical application of a human rights based approach to under five mortality, which is expected to come to fruition this September at the Human Rights Council. While there has been a significant reduction in mortality rates of children under five since 1990, 6.6 million children under five still die each year of preventable and treatable causes. Mortality remains highest among children belonging to the poorest and most marginalised communities and it is often not only driven by poverty, but also by discrimination and social exclusion.

Therefore, we believe that explicitly recognising and integrating human rights principles and standards into efforts to reduce child mortality and morbidity can help draw attention to potential barriers to successfully addressing this serious issue. Such a human rights based approach can highlight the range of actors involved in this work and provide a legal framework to strengthen public health efforts in this area. It can facilitate the identification of high-risk groups, enable analysis of the complex gaps they are facing in protection, participation and

accountability, and promote the identification of comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

The technical guidance being prepared by OHCHR, in close collaboration with WHO, is intended to assist national ministries and health systems in implementing policies and programmes to address and reduce preventable mortality and morbidity of children under five. Therefore, we particularly welcome the input of States into the development of the technical guidance through the public consultation and responses to the questionnaire disseminated by OHCHR. The development of the technical guidance has been advanced through close cooperation between the health and human rights communities. Such cooperation is essential if we are to effectively address inequities in realising the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and achieve Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5.

In this vein, we also hope that the technical guidance on under-five mortality, once completed, will be used to inform and guide the implementation of the *Every Newborn Action Plan* which was endorsed by the World Health Assembly just last month and which also emphasises the importance of integrating human rights principles into national and sub-national programming and planning to address preventable child mortality.

We look forward to the presentation in September of the technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce and eliminate preventable mortality and morbidity of children under five to the Council and to further consultations with all stakeholders on this issue.