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ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 3: PANEL DISCUSSION: MATERNAL MORTALITY

UN Human Rights Council

Thirty-fourth session
27 February-24 March 2017

Mr. Vice-President,

Amnesty International welcomes this panel discussion on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity as a human rights priority. Human rights-based, accountable and evidence-based policies and programmes must be developed, implemented and monitored with the active participation of civil society, and should ensure the full realisation of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all women and girls. The policies and programmes must address intersectional discrimination and inequalities underlying maternal deaths and injuries and prioritize the most marginalised groups. This requires adequate funding, including foreign aid, with no attached conditionality which may lead to human rights violations.

A comprehensive rights-based approach to maternal mortality and morbidity requires identification and elimination of all barriers in law, policy and practice linked to gender and intersectional discrimination, which limit or deny women and girls' full enjoyment of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Such barriers disproportionately affect disadvantaged women and girls, and exacerbate existing marginalisation and inequalities. States' failure to challenge stigma and discrimination in access to health services and information also leads to human rights violations and poor health outcomes for women and girls.

Amnesty International calls on the Human Rights Council to urge States to:

- Repeal laws, policies and practices which criminalise or punish women and girls' sexual and reproductive actions and decisions including laws criminalising abortion, women's conduct during pregnancy, same-sex sexual activity, adolescent sexuality or provision of health information;
- Ensure sexual and reproductive health services including abortion are of good quality, available and accessible to all women and girls without barriers;
- Empower health providers to implement a human rights-based approach to service provision, including respect for patient privacy and confidentiality and adolescents' "evolving capacities";
- Address stigma and discrimination resulting in denial of health services to women and girls;
- Ensure maternal mortality and morbidity policies and programmes are properly monitored through disaggregated data, and adequately funded, including through foreign aid, with no attached conditionality leading to human rights violations

Thank you.