**Submission to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights from Norway**

With reference to the report of the Secretary General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage (A/73/257), Norway presents the following responses to the questions from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Reference: WHRGS/OWC/RES/73/153).

1)

Norway has continued the implementation of the 28 measures presented in the Action Plan to Combat Negative Social Control, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation 2017-2020, The Right to Decide about One’s own life.

The action plan has been described in several UN-reports of Norway, such as the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports (CRC/C/NOR/5-6) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the ninth periodic report (CEDAW/C/NOR/9) to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the National report (A/HRC/WG.6/33/NOR/1) submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21 (Universal Periodic Review). For a broad description of the Norwegian context, reference is also made to the Norwegian Common Core Document (HRI/CORE/NOR/2017).

In 2018, the Storting approved an additional 12 measures to prevent and combat negative social control and so-called honour related violence.The Government has thus strengthened the action plan with stronger legal protection, preventive measures such as increasing the scheme with minority counsellors, developing a new website and increasing information measures, as well as ensuring better cooperation between public authorities.

In June 2019 the Norwegian Government decided to develop a sixth plan of action to combat domestic violence, including a specific part on violence and abuse in Sami communities.

The new Governmental action plan on domestic violence will meet obligations of the Istanbul Convention and will address issues under what we know as the four P’s: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Integrated Policy.

2)

The Action Plan to Combat Negative Social Control, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation contains 28 measures. These are measures to strengthen legislation, make available more information about the rights of vulnerable persons, transform attitudes and practice, reinforce competencies in service provision, strengthen preventive measures, and develop an international strategy against child and forced marriage. All measures are either initiated or implemented. The governmental funding to the measures is allocated throuh the state budget.

In 2019 the Government launched an Integration Strategy (2019–2022), where the right to live a free life is one of four focus areas. Parental guidance for newly-arrived refugees and immigrants, a review of the support services and Nordic cooperation on addressing negative social control, forced marriage and genital mutilation are important measures. The Government has also allocated NOK 20 million annually for funding to organisations engaged in projects to raise awareness and change attitudes regarding negative social control, forced marriage and genital mutilation.

Forced marriage is an offence according to the Penal Code Section 253. Contribution to forced marriage may also be punished. Religious forced marriages without legal validity fall outside the scope. The offender can, however, be punished under other provisions, in particular aggravated coercion under Section 252, which carries with it the same penalty as Section 253. Nonetheless, the Government will assess whether also religious forced marriages should be included in Section 253.

Amendments to the Marriage Act to prevent minors from entering into marriage, came into force July 1st 2018. The Marriage Act now sets an absolute minimum legal age for marriage of 18 years (in Norway), without any possibility to make exceptions from this age limit. The Marriage Act Section 1 b provides that women and men have the same right to choose a spouse freely. They shall contract the marriage of their own free will and by their own consent.

If someone has been forced by unlawful conduct to contract the marriage, each of the spouses may institute legal proceedings to have the marriage declared null and void. This applies regardless of who has exercised such force. A spouse may also demand divorce if he or she has been forced by unlawful conduct to contract the marriage. This applies regardless of who has exercised such force. Action must be taken within specified time limits.

In cases of family formation, both spouses must be at least 24 years of age. Exemptions are made if the relationship is clearly voluntary.

The Government is in the process of reviewing the passport law so that the Government can withhold or deny childrens passports to prevent them for being sent abroad against their will.

The new act relating to religious communities etc. proposes that a religious community, or individuals acting on behalf of the community, who commit violence or coercion, make threats, violate children's rights, violate statutory discrimination bans, or otherwise seriously violate the rights or freedoms of others, can be denied grants or that grants can be curtailed.

In 2019 Oslo Red Cross was granted funds to make an information campaign about children left abroad. The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) made an information campaign on negative social control and launched the website *imdi.no/nora*. Through the campaign period from february to march 2019 the site had approximately 40 000 unique page views in addition to 120 000 views on Instagram and 1,4 million views on Snapchat.

The Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in Norway (STL), received grants in 2017/2018 for the development and testing of local courses for religious leaders on various socially relevant topics.The Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo has developed an educational course for religious leaders. Since the fall of 2018 the topic of Dialogue and professional conversations in a faith and life-view plural society has been offered as a common topic in the new master of religious leaders, Leadership, ethics and conversational practice.

3)

Reference is made to the Action Plan to Combat Negative Social Control, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation 2017-2020 and the discription on how the work is organised.

Norwegian authorities has shared experiences on this field with other countries and in international conferences. It has been established a Nordic Network on Work against Negative Social Control and Honor Related Violence and the first meeting was held in Oslo in June 2019.

Norway's International Strategy to Eliminate Harmful Practices 2019-2023 was launched on the UN’s International Day of the Girl Child. In adopting the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the global community has committed itself to eliminating harmful practices by 2030. This strategy sets out how the Norwegian Government will target its international activities to drive this effort forward.

4)

Reference is made to the state party reports (CRC/C/NOR/5-6 and CEDAW/C/NOR/9) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

In accordance with the Norwegian Child Welfare Act, minors exposed to violence, abuse and neglect are cared for and given the necessary aid. The sheltered accommodation offered to minors fearing or subjected to forced marriage has been evaluated. There is a need for increased competency on risk assessment and safety work. As a follow up, a new study will be launched in the beginning of 2020.

A mentoring scheme for young people subjected to negative social control, honour-based violence and forced marriage was introduced in 2018. In 2019, 2 million NOK is allocated to this purpose.

The police have a number of measures in place to protect threatened people, assessed on the basis of a threat assessment in each case.

There are several websites that provides information about the available places to seek help, such as, *rodekorstelefonen.no,* *dinutvei.no* and *imdi.no/nora*.

5)

In connection with the implementation of the measures in the action plan, a reference group consisting of representatives from NGOs and resource persons was established. The last meeting was held in October 2019.

The Regional Center on Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention arranged in 2019 an expert conference on the use of resource persons from relevant communities as change agents. The report from the conference will form the basis for a training program, which will be piloted in 2020.

An Expert Group is set up to review individual cases of children/adolescents sent abroad on involuntary stays. The Expert Group will investigate up to 10 individual cases in which persons have been left abroad against their will, in particular to give the perspective of those who have been exposed.

On the website imdi.no/nora people can share their stories. The website provides advice about what you can do and where to seek help.

The Government is financing a comprehensive review of the specialized support services with emphasis on securing the user perspective. The report is expected in May 2020.

6)

Norway's principle approach to inclusion in higher education including equal access to free and quality education for women is that of mainstreaming. Among the general measures to promote inclusion are free tuition at all state higher education institutions, entitlement to financial support for students through the State Educational Loan Fund, access to

student housing, canteens, and health and other services through the Student Welfare Organisations.

Statistics from 2017 show that 37 % of women and 30 % of men have higher education. Statistics from 2018 show that 42,8 % of women and 28,4 % of men within the age span of 19-24 years were in higher education. Women get gender points in a select few bachelor and integrated master programmes where women are clearly underrepresented, securing easier access to those programmes.

7)

Reference is made to the state party reports (CRC/C/NOR/5-6 and CEDAW/C/NOR/9) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The Directorate of Labor and Welfare has developed guidlines for employees on issues related to domestic violence and human trafficking. The purpose is to increase the competence in the Welfare Administration regarding the special needs of these groups in follow-up and assistance. The guide is posted on the websites NAVET and NAV.no.

8)

Reference is made to the implementation of the action plan to combat domestic violence.

In June 2018 the Government presented the first national Strategy for Parent Support in Norway. The Strategy is part of the Government's broad commitment to preventive work and early efforts.

In 2019, 3 million NOK is allocated to increase knowledge on negative social control, forced marriage and honour-based violence among guardianship authorities, other authorities, and guardians.The Government has updated guidelines on forced marriage and honour related violence and on children left abroad.

9)

In 2017, the government established 12 support offices for victims of crime. The offices are located in police stations and are financed by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. These offices give advice and render practical help; they inform and assist the victim in contacting other public services. They also inform on the pending of a criminal case, from the bringing of charge to the court’s judgment, and the rights of victims, and they assist with preparing applications for criminal injuries compensation and ex-gratia payment.

Crime victims are rendered compensation through general state funded compensation schemes, such as sick pay and national insurance benefits, public and private insurance scheme etc. In addition, the following compensation schemes exist:

Act on Compensation from the State for Personal Injury caused by a Criminal Act (Criminal Injuries Compensation Act) gives persons who have endured personal injury caused by an intentional bodily harm or other criminal act marked by violence or force, or his or her surviving relatives, a right to criminal injuries compensation from the state. The criminal injuries compensation scheme is funded by the state through the Ministry of Justice and Public Security’s budget.

10)

The research program on domestic violence has been strengthened by 6 million NOK annually to include research on issues included in the Action Plan to Combat

Negative Social Control, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation.

There has been a sharp rise in the number of reported cases of domestic violence the last years. In 2018, 3509 cases were reported to the police. This is an increase of 14 % from 2014 to 2018. The number of reported rape cases has increased with 45 % from 2014 to 2018.

The increase in the number of cases reported must be viewed in connection with the increased efforts by both the police and the society as a whole in combating and preventing violence against women and domestic violence the last years.

In 6 out of a total of 24 cases of homicide in 2018, women were killed by current or former intimate partner. In Norway the “partner homicides” constitutes between 20 and 30 % of murders committed every year.

In 2018 there were reported 5 cases of forced marriage to the Minority advisors and 5 cases of forced marriage to the Integration advisors. In addition, fear of being forced to marry, were reported in 19 cases to the Minority advisors and in 24 cases to the Integration advisors.