

## **Joint Statement of Support for the Respect of Afghan Women's and Girls' Human Rights**

*Paris, 10 February 2022*

We, the undersigned members of the UNESCO Group of Friends for Gender Equality, express our deep concern over the current ongoing situation in Afghanistan marked by increasingly systematic violations of Afghan women's and girls' enjoyment of human rights.

Given events taking place in Afghanistan, particularly the exclusion of Afghan women from the social, political, economic, and educational spheres of life, the latest report of a group of UN human rights experts entitled "[Taliban attempting to steadily erase women and girls from public life](#)" and the UNESCO Executive Board [Decision 212 EX/47](#), we call on the international community, notably UNESCO and its member states, to do their utmost to support Afghan women in achieving and preserving their enjoyment of human rights.

Over the past 20 years, women and girls across Afghanistan have made visible gains in all spheres of public life, including in the fields of education, media, and communication. Today these achievements are rapidly being reversed. As made clear in the recent report, the restrictions introduced in recent months constitute a "collective punishment of women and girls", greatly affecting their enjoyment of human rights, including to the right to education, work, and freedom of expression. Special concern is expressed for women belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities, women human rights defenders, and leaders, as well as women judges, prosecutors, former government and security forces employees, and women journalists. This reversal has been characterized as "institutionalizing large scale and systematic gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls."

Understanding the immediate need for humanitarian assistance from the international community, we stress that in providing humanitarian assistance to Afghans, special attention must be paid to addressing the dire situation facing Afghan women and girls.

It is critically important that the significant progress made in Afghanistan is not lost or undone. We call on the international community, UNESCO, and its member states to continue to monitor the situation, contribute to ensuring accountability for violations of human rights law, and to support efforts to ensure the upholding of the enjoyment of all human rights by Afghan women and girls, and in particular, immediate respect for their:

- right to education;
- right to work;
- right to political participation; and
- right to information and freedom of expression.

All Afghan girls and women should have the possibility to fully enjoy their human rights.

*Co-signed by the following members of the UNESCO Group of Friends for Gender Equality; Iceland, Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Palau, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Uruguay.*