

**HIGH LEVEL INTER-MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE ON SON PREFERENCE AND
GENDER BIASED SEX SELECTION (GBSS)**

**INTER-MINISTERIAL CALL TO ACTION (DECLARATION) TO END SON PREFERENCE AND
GENDER BIASED SEX SELECTION**

During the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

March 12, 2021

New York

1. **Having held a** global high level inter-ministerial dialogue on son preference and gender biased sex selection (GBSS) virtually on March 12, 2021 during the 65th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), this inter-ministerial call to action was presented by member states represented by *Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Georgia, Nepal, Viet Nam supported by UNFPA.*
2. **Acknowledged** that this dialogue and its declaration aims at supporting the ongoing global, regional, and national efforts to an inter-ministerial collaboration for an end to harmful practices such as son preference and gender biased sex selection, child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) within the larger efforts to promote gender equality and rights, and address Gender Based Violence (GBV) and discrimination. Unless the issue of son preference and the undervaluing of girls are addressed, the potential to reach Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Agenda will be undermined.
3. **Recognized** son preference and gender biased sex selection is evident or increasing skewing of sex ratio in in several countries, including where countries that UNFPA is currently supporting Azerbaijan, Bangladesh Georgia, Nepal, and Viet Nam.
4. **Reaffirmed** that the respective governments have been working for several years collaboratively with civil society, academia, and communities to address son preference and undervaluing of girls, For example, on the development of national policies and tools, legislative reforms, government National Action Plan (NAP) on Response to and Prevention of gender biased sex selection as well as data collection and analysis. It has also led to increased public discourse about the issue and generated awareness about the different dimensions of gender biased sex selection and its consequences.
5. **Accepted** that addressing issues of undervaluing of girls and women's limited choices and decision making is a critical sexual reproductive health and rights priority. And that with the emergence of COVID-19, there has been a realization that humanitarian development priorities are multidimensional, interconnected, and inter-sectoral.
6. **Recognized** that if the issue of son preference and undervaluing of girls is not adequately accorded high political and policy level attention, and unless addressed, the countries may face its negative impact including, for example, a wider gender gap in education, reduction in the proportion of women in the labor market, less gender diversity and in all spheres of public life.

Preamble

7. **Reaffirmed** that Ministers and policy makers from the represented member states remain individually and jointly fully committed towards the protection of women's decision making to their sexual reproductive health and rights and working towards/strengthening efforts in placing equal value on boys and girls.
8. **Accepted** that the Ministers and senior government officials are to deliberately position the importance of addressing son preference and the undervaluing of girls in all high-level advocacy engagements and events, starting with the 65th session of the CSW.

9. **Agreed** that UNFPA will convene follow-up meetings of Ministers and donors co-hosted by 2 other member states on a rotational basis, to discuss the progress made on the implementation of the priority actions of this call to actions.
10. **Acknowledged** that there are some gaps such as: diversity of existing policies and strategies against son preference and gender biased sex selection gaps and to manage the consequences of skewed sex ratios.

We, the ministers from the GBSS implementing countries do hereby recommit our efforts to call on our national governments and partners to strengthen our respective actions in addressing son preference and gender biased sex selection thus:

1. **Acknowledge** that Ministers need to ensure the sharing of annual estimates on the extent and local variations of sex imbalances at birth.
2. **Commit** to create a social, economic, and political atmosphere of equality between men and women, girls and boys, and respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women and girls,
3. **Recognize** the need to set up an international comparative observatory of son preference and gender biased sex selection in Asia and Europe for monitoring trends and assessing the social and demographic impact of sex imbalances at birth.
4. **Commit** to allocate sufficient and long term financial and technical resources for preventing son preference and gender biased sex selection programmes, for addressing the deep rooted and structural issues related to gender discrimination.
5. **Recognize** that Ministers and other senior policy makers should put into practice actions that broaden and intensify co-operation between and among states, local governance, and CSOs on integrating services for addressing son preference and gender biased sex selection in national, regional, and global response to COVID-19 and other emergencies and humanitarian crises.
6. **Recognize** that Ministers need to promote the elimination of gender biased in all society, including within the family context.
7. **Recognize** the role of Ministers to support the creation of a knowledge hub for governments and other national actors, to share policy experiences in relation to son preference and gender biased sex selection initiatives across countries. This could include **launching** a platform for regular exchange of knowledge and good practices by governments and other national actors.
8. **Reaffirm** that Ministers should ensure that laws against son preference and gender biased sex selection remain grounded/aligned with international human rights,
9. Recognize the need to take actions that address the deep-rooted preference for male offspring, and which promote the equal value of girls, that can be contextualized across countries. As part of these efforts institute policies that protect women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and ensure these are translated into national laws and policies and enforced through local action plans.
10. **Agree** to include the reporting on son preference and gender biased sex selection indicators as part of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).