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## UN Women and UNICEF promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women in Latin America and the Caribbean

News and Press Release

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*Garry Conille, UNICEF Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean and Cecilia Alemany, Deputy Regional Director and Officer in Charge of the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean subscribe the memorandum of understanding.*

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***Strengthening national care system policies, prevention, and attention to gender violence, promotion of gender equality and empowerment of girls and women are part of the collaboration agreement***

**Panama City, Panama, September 25, 2023.**-UN Women and UNICEF today signed a collaboration agreement with the aim of promoting and supporting national care systems, gender equality, civic

agreement with the aim of promoting and supporting national care systems, gender equality, civic participation and the empowerment of girls and women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the region, adolescent girls, young women and women face a series of challenges that put at risk their right to quality health and nutrition, learning and opportunities to acquire skills, economic security and to live free of violence and exploitation.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, 19 percent of adolescent girls and women between 15 and 49 years of age have experienced physical or sexual violence by their partner in the last year, 20 percent of young women between 20 and 24 years of age married or joined their partner early before turning 18, while in the field of studies only 30 percent of graduates in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are women. On average, the countries of the region have adopted 70% or more of the legal frameworks essential for the achievement of the rights of women and adolescent girls, although these rights are not fully realized.

"Each day in Latin America and the Caribbean, girls and women face the harsh realities of discrimination, poverty, and violence, which tragically includes instances of sexual exploitation and femicide. A concerning trend we observe is that as girls progress in their educational journey, their likelihood of completing school diminishes. On average, only 70 percent of adolescent girls manage to complete upper secondary education in the region, with some countries reporting rates as low as 25 percent. This creates a distressing cycle of disadvantage, one that will persist unless we address its underlying structural causes, including deeply ingrained gender norms. It is imperative that we adopt comprehensive social policies informed by a gender perspective," remarked Garry Conille, UNICEF Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

"Gender violence emanates from structural inequalities in societies with power hierarchies between men and women. Protecting and raising awareness among girls and adolescents about these inequalities is the way to prevent these gender models and stereotypes from being reproduced in the future and continuing to be perpetuated. This agreement with UNICEF brings us closer to this population and allows us to hope that the girls and adolescents of today, who are the women of tomorrow, live in a world without violence, with women in decision-making spaces and comprehensive systems of care that allow their full participation in society," said Cecilia Alemany, Deputy Regional Director and Officer in Charge of the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean.

With a regional scope, the collaboration agreement will develop awareness-raising and advocacy actions to improve the availability and accessibility of child care services, prevention and response to violence against girls and adolescents, the promotion of digital capabilities and the deconstruction of gender stereotypes. linked to education, training and professional development in science, technology, information and mathematics, promotion of gender equality, civic participation and the empowerment of girls and women through access to education, prevention and humanitarian response with perspective gender, positive gender socialization and positive masculinities, strengthening advocacy actions and resource mobilization.

"Undoubtedly, intensifying our joint efforts with UN Women to safeguard the rights of girls, adolescents, and women equips us to integrate strategies and resources effectively. This collaboration strengthens our resolve to attain the gender equality objectives outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals. We

are delighted to reaffirm our commitment to working in close partnership and coordination with UN Women to improve the circumstances of women and girls in our region" Conille further stated. "Just a few days ago with Generation Equality [Generación Igualdad] we renewed the global commitment to accelerate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This agreement with UNICEF helps us move in that direction and make the achievement of all the SDGs a reality, with gender equality as a transversal objective to all the others," added Cecilia Alemany, from UN Women.

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