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Item 10: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Cambodia, Prof Rhona SMITH – 28 September

Mr. President,

The International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE), *Operations Enfants du Cambodge*, Points-Coeur, the Congregation of our Lady of the Good Shepherd, *Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice (IIMA)*, *International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education, Development (VIDES)* and the *Compagny of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul* welcome the report on the human rights situation in Cambodia and congratulate Prof. Rhona SMITH for her determined efforts.

The co-signing organizations would like to point out the issue of violence against children, including sexual abuse in Cambodia. According to the Cambodia Gender Assessment 2014 led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs¹:

1. There are few robust data on rape and sexual violence reported by victims, and gang rape is higher in Cambodia than other countries in the region.
2. Sexual harassment is prevalent in the workplace and in communities and girls are particularly vulnerable.
3. There is a lack of coordination between authorities, investigative resources and skills, and clear guidelines to carry out and enforce laws and policies.
4. Social and legal support services to survivors of violence are not systematically provided, available and accessible for all women and girls.
5. There is no provision of free post-exposure prophylaxis in cases of sexual assault, especially for girls in most at-risk populations.

Even if the 2nd National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW II) (2014-2018) provides *inter alia* for primary prevention, multi-sector protection and legal services, law and policy, capacity building and monitoring, two years later its adoption, there are no significant improvements in prevention, counseling, care and support, and the access to justice for victims.

Despite the high number of unreported cases, sex tourism has also generated harmful and adverse consequences on children, including on boys. However, there is no comprehensive legal and policy framework addressing sexual violence against children, both boys and girls. We recommend that **Cambodia adopts a specific legal, policy and a multi-sectoral services' framework to fight against child sexual abuse and provides the implementation and monitoring mechanisms with adequate resources.**

Our organizations consider the access to education and human rights education as a tool for violence prevention. However, reducing the dropout rate in primary education, particularly in remote areas and early education policies are contrary to the current policy which requires 1.020 families in a village before opening a school. Most of the victims of child sexual abuse are vulnerable isolated children with no alternative care, children who drop out from schools or who cannot afford further studies due to financial problems. We recommend that **Cambodia strengthens the universal access to education and compulsory primary education goals, and make Child-Friendly Schools available to children, including in isolated zones where there is a limited number of children living there.**

Thank you Mr. President

¹Ministry of Women's Affairs (2014), *Cambodia Gender Assessment*, Executive Summary. December 2014. Phnom Penh.