

**Human Rights Council, 35<sup>th</sup> Session: June 13, 2017**

**NGO Statement: Annual Day: Human Rights of Women**

**Panel 2: Women's rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:  
health and gender equality**

**Submitted by: Association of Women's Rights in Development**

Women human rights defenders are at the forefront of rights struggles across the breadth of the SDGs and in all human rights arenas. WHRDs are targeted in each area because of our work, including for *what* we do, the *fact* that we do it, and the *identities* we carry.

The Women Human Rights Defender International Coalition has particular intersectional contextual concerns which shape our defense of rights:

- 1) Attacks on the entire framework of human rights
- 2) Government efforts to limit space for civil society voice and action
- 3) Rise in fundamentalisms across all regions and contexts (including those related to religion)
- 4) Negative effects of globalisation, and neo-liberal economic ideology, including poverty and inequality
- 5) Militarism and the devastating effects of proliferation of arms and defense industries and related spending
- 6) Crises of governance and democracy
- 7) Patriarchy, heteronormativity and other social norms that limit enjoyment of rights of women, WHRDs and all people.

In terms of SDG 3 and 5, we emphasize the following two main points:

1- WHRDs are involved in defense of rights related to health and are targeted as a result. Our focus areas include rights *to* services, to non-discrimination *in* health services, to reproductive and sexual rights, rights to independent and autonomous decision-making about our bodies and our lives, and we also focus on specific issues such as access to or denial of medical care in detention. WHRDs also promote health-related rights related to ending torture and violence, whether at the hands of state agents such as police, or of family and community members, for which the state can bear responsibility, as well.

2- There is deep impact on the physical and mental health of WHRDs because of threats to and attacks against our work, our bodies and those of our colleagues and families, and even our offices. This is true

particularly for WHRDs who experience violence, torture, psychological harassment and other forms of discrimination and antagonism.

Recognizing the roles of WHRDs is critical to the support of and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. These all must be better documented by the mechanisms of the Council, and by others in the human rights system, including by UN agencies and programs that address human rights defenders.

Would the panel address concrete ideas about the roles of women human rights defenders as they relate to the promotion and protection of the rights and implementation of the SGDs?

Thank you.