



The Greens | European Free Alliance  
in the European Parliament



## Women and girls urge EU leadership to help end gender-based violence

October 12, Brussels – Multi-sectoral experts will meet in Brussels today to discuss the urgent issue of gender-based violence that is prevalent worldwide, and gets particularly worse in conflict and among displaced populations. For example, in camps and host communities, lack of security and inadequate protection leave women and girls vulnerable to rape and harassment. Women and girls are disproportionately more affected than men in times of crisis. However, in 2014, only 12 per cent of UN crisis response funding was allocated to programmes taking into account women and girls' specific needs.

Today, Care International and World Vision are organizing the roundtable “*Invest in and Empower Women and Girls affected by Crisis & Fragility - Challenges and Practices from Yemen, DRC and South Sudan*”. Hosted by MEP Ulrike Lunacek, Vice-President of the European Parliament, this roundtable convenes specialists including from Care International, World Vision, the development department of the European Commission and humanitarian and peace-building agencies. The overall aim of the event is to explore ways in which the EU applies gender-sensitive policies in crises and fragile contexts and ensure that every girl and every woman is reached and empowered.

“Women and girls have to be at the centre of crisis and conflict prevention efforts as well as in development policies because without the empowerment of women and girls, there can be no global culture and practice of peace” says MEP Ulrike Lunacek, Vice-President of the European Parliament.

The event will take a closer look at three crises and fragile contexts where sexual and gender-based violence is prevalent: Yemen, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The conflict in Yemen has worsened conditions for women and girls, with an estimated 52,000 women likely requiring responsive critical medical care and immediate and long-term psychosocial support. Child marriage, often seen as a boon or economic escape, is also on the rise with more than half of Yemeni girls getting married before the age of 18.

Since the conflict erupted again in South Sudan in 2013, children have been repeatedly targeted for recruitment by armed groups, with a number of cases of acute physical violence, as well as high incidences of sexual and gender-based violence.

Eastern DRC has not been spared by the phenomenon. Families and communities' capacities to protect their children have been largely eroded because of the long lasting conflict. This significantly increases the probability of exploitation, neglect, abuse and all other forms of violence affecting children.

“In too many places, being a woman or a girl means not being heard or being able to speak out for yourself or your peers. In this, we all have a role to play – from faith leaders and civil society to the EU,” says Justin Byworth, World Vision Brussels Executive Director. “The EU and its Member States must ensure, in line with their promises, that no woman or girl, wherever she lives, is left behind unprotected, disempowered and unheard.”

“The EU and its Member States must do whatever it takes to end violence against women and girls. In reality, many commitments remain rhetoric”, says Céline Mias, EU Representative of CARE International. “We call upon policy-makers and implementing agencies to factor in the special needs of



The Greens | European Free Alliance  
in the European Parliament



women and girls in crises, and to commit the technical and financial resources to end the pervasive violence. Words are not enough, we need implementation and accountability.”

## ENDS

### Notes to editors

**Ulrike Lunacek** is currently Vice-President of the European Parliament; she has been MEP (Greens/EFA) since 2009, EP-Rapporteur for Kosovo, Co-President of the LGBTI Intergroup of the EP; she is also a Member of the Committees on Foreign Affairs and on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

Her specific work on foreign affairs, with a conflict prevention and rights-based focus on human rights, women's rights, rights of ethnic and sexual minorities, has been at the core of her political work even before she entered party politics, including the struggle for fair trade and socially and ecologically sustainable trade relations.

**CARE International** is one of the leading humanitarian and development organisations. In 2015, CARE worked in 95 countries, supporting 890 projects, and reaching more than 65 million people. We provide assistance on the basis of need, regardless of race, creed or nationality addressing the rights of vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls. We seek a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and all people live in dignity and security.

**For more information or an interview:** please contact Inge Brees, Senior EU Advocacy Officer, CARE International EU office, +32 (0) 2 289 00 17, [brees@careinternational.org](mailto:brees@careinternational.org)

**World Vision** is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. It works in close to 100 countries in most regions of the world including Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Asia Pacific Region.

World Vision Brussels' office represents World Vision members in 12 European countries, including 10 EU member states, as well as the wider international World Vision partnership.

**For more information or an interview:** please contact Ludovic Wahis, Policy and Communications Officer, World Vision Brussels & EU Representation, +32 (0) 2 274 18 67, [Ludovic\\_Wahis@wvi.org](mailto:Ludovic_Wahis@wvi.org)