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STATEMENT BY CANADA
DELIVERED BY
THE HONOURABLE DR. K. KELLIE LEITCH P.C., O. ONT., M.P.
CANADA’S MINISTER OF STATUS OF WOMEN

IN THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
AGENDA ITEM 28:
ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

NEW YORK, 11 OCTOBER 2013

DECLARATION DU CANADA
PRONONCÉE PAR
L’HONORABLE DRE. K. KELLIE LEITCH, C.P., DÉPUTÉE
MINISTRE DE LA CONDITION FÉMININE DU CANADA

EN TROISIÈME COMMISSION DE L’ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE
POINT 28 DE L’ORDRE DU JOUR :
PROMOTION DE LA FEMME

NEW YORK, LE 11 OCTOBRE 2013
Thank you Mr. Chair,

Allow me to begin by stating that the promotion and protection of women’s human rights are central to Canada’s domestic, foreign and development assistance policy.

Canada does not shy away from tough conversations about the importance of women’s full and equal participation in all aspects of social, economic and political life; the elimination of violence against women; women’s economic independence and the political empowerment of women.

This is because we know that all of these factors contribute to a more stable, democratic and economically prosperous world.

Here at the United Nations, Canada’s support for women’s rights and women’s issues is unwavering. We were one of the first countries to demonstrate our commitment to UN Women upon its establishment in 2011, and Canada continues to be one of the organization’s largest donors to core resources.

Canada’s commitment is not limited to funding. For instance, Canada leads the annual resolution on Violence Against Women at the Human Rights Council, an effort that last year achieved the recognition of marital rape as a crime of sexual violence.

We are also proud to say that the resolution adds the investigation of violence against women and girls to mandates of all future Human Rights Council Commissions of Inquiry and Fact-finding missions.

Canada is also a strong supporter of the six UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security, including the importance of full participation of women in peace processes and all aspects of conflict resolution.

We are equally committed to the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and the protection of women’s and girls’ rights in fragile and conflict-affected communities. Sexual and gender-based violence is a violation of the rights of both women and girls, and a barrier to peace and development.

To this end, Canada has provided over $13 million in support toward ending sexual violence and encouraging the full participation of women in emerging democracies.

Canada continues to work domestically on promoting and protecting the rights of all women. We recognize that Canada has challenges in this area and we are endeavouring to address them.

We have worked on preventing violence against women in all our communities, on engaging men and boys in these efforts and on addressing sexual violence in colleges and universities.

In fact, since 2007, Status of Women Canada has provided more than $62 million for projects to prevent and end violence against women and girls.
We are also working in partnership with stakeholders at the local level to increase the economic security of women and girls in communities across Canada, including increasing women’s representation in non-traditional occupations.

Canada places a high priority on the full participation of women and girls in all aspects of society. So many problems are resolved when women participate actively in society, and what we hope to achieve becomes possible: access to education and improved child and maternal health care. What is good for women and girls is good for us all.

In response, last month here at the UN, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced over 200 million dollars in support for nine projects around the globe. These cover a range of issues that will improve the health of mothers and children, and will strengthen immunization efforts in developing countries.

The tragedy is that many women and children in developing countries are victims of disease, poor nutrition and inadequate care. As a Doctor and Pediatric Orthopedic Surgeon I know that these are often entirely preventable situations and that’s why improving child and maternal health is a flagship priority for Canada.

But so is putting an end to forced marriages.

For many women and girls, their opportunities are cut short. That’s because every year, in every region of the world, millions of girls are forced into marriage, some as young as 9 years old.

In the time we will have spent here, 2,200 children will be forced into early marriage. Today, an estimated one in three girls in the developing world is married before the age of 18.

The practice of child, early and forced marriage denies girls’ rights, disrupts their education, and severely jeopardizes their health.

Canada is committed to taking a leadership role on this issue, and we will continue to work with any and all partners around the world to find a way to end this practice. Our government is standing up for these girls, even when it’s not always popular or expedient to do so.

As part of our efforts, Canada co-hosted, along with the Governments of Ghana and The Netherlands, a side-event to raise awareness of this issue at the General Assembly where we heard the powerful story of Farwa, who spoke of her friend married at age 12 and who barely escaped marriage herself while she was in 8th grade.

Canada also played an active role in a procedural resolution addressing child, early, and forced marriage that was adopted at the 24th session of the Human Rights Council at the end of September in Geneva.

And to maintain the momentum of these initiatives, I am very pleased to formally announce that Canada is working with our partners to pursue the first-ever stand-alone resolution on child, early, and forced marriage during this year’s UN General Assembly.
This procedural resolution will serve to pave the way for a full substantive resolution at next fall’s UNGA. Canada appreciates the support we have already received from country partners, and would appreciate your support on this resolution, and on future initiatives related to child, early, and forced marriage.

Both the HRC and UNGA resolutions are complementary and will inform the substantive work by the international community on this issue, including in the post-2015 framework.

Canada remains committed to the advancement of women and to promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls and we look forward to working with countries assembled here to further these goals.