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## 44th session of the Human Rights Council

### Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women

#### Panel 2: COVID-19 and women's rights

Geneva, 14 June 2020

Statement by Austria, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland

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Madam President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of Austria, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and my own country, Switzerland.

2020 was intended to be a ground breaking year for gender equality. Instead, the pandemic has contributed to deepening pre-existing inequalities, to exposing vulnerabilities and discrimination all around the world. It has become evident that the pandemic is not impacting everyone equally.

Many factors put women at a higher risk in terms of health outcomes and social and economic consequences:

As frontline health workers, women are exposed to a greater risk of infection. At the same time, women and girls are also shouldering much of the burden at home, given longstanding gender inequalities in **unpaid care and domestic work**. Lockdowns also increase the risk of **sexual and gender based violence, including intimate partner violence**. There is also an imbalanced **economic impact** of the crisis and women face high risks of job and income loss. Women's and girls' **access to essential health services**, such as those related to **sexual and reproductive health**, is also adversely affected by the pandemic.

It is hence timely to focus our discussion on recovery and on how we can use this disrupting moment to address gender inequalities.

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The first point I'd like to raise is that women need to have a seat at the table: Women's full, equal and meaningful participation to help shape, implement and monitor COVID responses and recovery is key to building back better.

Second, we all need to improve data collection: accurate and comprehensive age- and sex-disaggregated data on the gendered impact of the health pandemic is crucial to facilitate informed and evidence-based policy making.

Thirdly, it's central to address gender inequalities in COVID-19 economic recovery plans.

Finally, I would also like to insist on the central role of multilateral institutions in building back better. The COVID-19 pandemic has confirmed the importance and relevance of multilateralism. We therefore call on all stakeholders to use this opportunity to recommit to multilateralism.

**Distinguished panelists, how can we monitor that Covid-19 recovery plans are gender-responsive and follow a human rights based approach?**

I thank you.