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refer to: FWC

Your reference:

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Minister for Equality and Minister for  
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Ms Ulla Tørnæs  
Minister for Development Cooperation of  
Denmark

Ms Ellen Trane Nørby  
Minister of Health

Ministry of Health  
Holbergsgade 6  
DK-1057 Copenhagen K

15 March 2018

Dear Ministers,

I have the honour to thank you for your letter dated 8 March 2018, and your appreciation of my ongoing efforts to strengthen the work of the World Health Organization (WHO). I would like to thank you also for your interest in and support of the work of the WHO Department of Reproductive Health and Research on 'virginity testing'.

As noted in your letter, the WHO Department of Reproductive Health and Research supported the first systematic review on virginity testing published in *Reproductive Health* in 2017, which found the practice to be unnecessary, not supported by medical evidence and potentially harmful. We are pleased to know of the complementary work of Jørgen Lange Thomsen and Gry Stevens Senderovitz, and your support in efforts to eliminate this harmful practice.

WHO agrees that health professionals, public officials and community leaders must be better informed, and this is why we are currently finalizing a new WHO statement on the elimination of virginity testing. Drawing upon evidence from the systematic review, the statement outlines the specific human rights violated by the practice, and identifies three strategic areas for governments, healthcare professionals and their associations, international, regional, and national health agencies and communities at large to join in efforts towards ending this harmful practice. We have also included a recommendation against performing any type of virginity testing in the 2017 WHO clinical guidelines for responding to children and adolescents who have been sexually abused. A similar recommendation appears in the WHO Clinical Handbook for health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence and sexual violence.

cc: The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen  
Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations Office and other International  
Organizations at Geneva

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We will use all available platforms through WHO departments and our stakeholders to disseminate this statement globally. We would welcome further collaboration with the Government of Denmark on the dissemination of the statement and other work to address all forms of violence and all harmful practices against women and girls.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus  
Director-General