

Thank you Mr/Madam President/Chair,

I am here representing the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action, JISRA, a consortium of NGOs committed to strengthening Freedom of religion or belief enshrined in Article 18 of the UDHR. Jisr in Arabic means bridge and we are building bridges between faith communities.

We have seen first hand how the meaningful participation of women and young people in decision making spaces are vital not only to political stability but also to the attainment of economic progress and religious freedom. Through our work, women in conflict-divided communities in Nigeria and Iraq are being appointed for the first time into traditional councils where they are now ensuring issues that were not being addressed previously are being heard. These traditional councils hold a large amount of power and influence particularly on human rights issues.

However, this is one of the many important spaces in which women have been historically excluded from even at the grassroots.

I call on member states to call for women and young people's participation in governance at the upcoming UPR review of Nigeria. We also urge the government of Nigeria to implement the Gender and Equal Opportunities bill and ensure that it complies with international human rights treaties.

We need to hear the voices of women and young people at every level, including in this chamber.

Thank you