

#March8 Don't forget GIRLS

The Committee of Experts of the Follow-Up Mechanism to the [Belém do Pará Convention \(MESECVI\)](#), in the framework of International Women's Day, expresses its commitment to the eradication of pregnancy in girls under 14 and the promotion of the right of all girls to live free from violence.

Why does the Committee support this issue? The high rates of sexual violence against girls, their direct impact on child marriage or union and child pregnancy, forced motherhood and the absence of policies that address this grave situation have been a source of constant concern to the Committee of Experts.

What is the position of the Committee? It has been emphatic that sexual relations with girls younger than 14 are a crime and that any pregnancy in a girl under 14 should be considered the product of sexual violence, except if the relationship occurs between peers of the same age.

Why do girls have to continue with pregnancies against their will? In many countries of the region, abortion is prohibited or restricted and, even when permitted in cases of sexual violence or risk to the physical or mental health of the girl, may be difficult to access. In addition, lack of information or misinformation, legislation that perpetuates gender stereotypes and the absence or non-utilization of protocols in cases where abortion is permitted are the main reasons that a girl is forced to continue with a pregnancy.

In this context, next March 23rd, the OAS will host the round-table "[Sexual Violence and Child Pregnancy in Latin America and the Caribbean: A regional overview.](#)"

The round table will address the main consequences of sexual violence - child pregnancy, maternal mortality and forced marriages. In addition, it will launch the ***Hemispheric Report on Sexual Violence and Child Pregnancy in the States Party to the Belém do Pará Convention***, which looks at the severe situation of maternal mortality among girls aged 10 to 14. Registration [here](#).

The [Committee of Experts](#) is the technical component of the MESECVI, responsible for the analysis and evaluation of the implementation of the Belém do Pará Convention. It is made up of independent Experts that are designated by each of the States Party to the Convention, and perform their functions in their personal capacity.