



**Make  
Mothers  
Matter**

**Oral STATEMENT  
37th session of the Human Right Council**

**Item3**

**Clustered ID with the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment**

MMM welcomes the excellent report of the special rapporteur on the relationship between children's rights and environmental protection - especially its focus on early childhood as well as its inter-generational perspective.

As rightly stated in the report, no group is more vulnerable to environmental harm than children.

But within this group, environmental harm like air or water pollution, or exposure to toxics has the greatest impacts during their early years, including while in their mothers' womb.

Possible damages during these critical early years include physical impairment, lower cognitive ability or diseases that can have life-long negative consequences. In other words, environmental harm during the prenatal and early childhood period can jeopardize a child's development to their full potential, and their ability to contribute to society later in life.

In addition to obvious health and human costs, this translates in important future social and economic costs, for families, for communities and for society as a whole.

To complement the special rapporteur's recommendations, MMM therefore calls on Member States:

1. To adopt a mother and child-centered human rights-based approach in the enactment and enforcement of laws and policies to ensure a healthy environment, and to prioritize and invest in prevention and the protection of mothers and children – the best and long-term interest of the child must come before businesses short-term interest.
2. To raise awareness, inform and educate mothers and other caregivers on the effects of pollution on children, including during pregnancy, and to advise on how to best mitigate these effects. Antenatal and infant care visits can also provide opportunities for parental environmental education.

Mothers, families and other caregivers must be considered as stakeholders in prevention and mitigation strategies against environmental harm.

Thank you!

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*Make Mothers Matter (MMM) is an international NGO created in 1947 to raise the awareness of policy makers and public opinion on the contribution of mothers to social, cultural and economic development. MMM has no political or religious affiliations, and thus transparently voices the concerns of mothers at international level with permanent MMM representatives at the United Nations (General Consultative Status), UNESCO and the European Union.*