

Girl Summit seeks total ban on FGM

London, Wednesday

PRIME Minister David Cameron called on Tuesday for a worldwide ban on female genital mutilation and child marriage as he launched the first UN-backed "Girl Summit" on issues that affect millions around the globe.

Cameron announced that parents in Britain would face prosecution for failing to prevent their daughters from being subjected to FGM, while setting out steps to tackle both practices in developing nations.

"Our aim is to outlaw FGM and child marriage everywhere for everyone," Cameron told the summit in London, to applause from an audience of experts and campaigners from around the world.

FGM, which affects tens of millions of women, particularly in the Horn of Africa, ranges from removal of the clitoris to the mutilation and removal of other female genitalia. It can leave girls at risk of prolonged bleeding, infection, infertility and even death.

Cameron acknowledged that ending FGM and child marriage was no easy task, saying they ranked alongside the global health threats of polio and tuberculosis in terms of the commitment needed to tackle them.

But he argued: "All girls have the right to live free from violence and coercion, without being forced into marriage or the lifelong physical and psychological effects of female genital mutilation.