



Finland to the UN Security Council in 2013–2014

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on Population and Development

Statement by

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(check against delivery)

Eighteen years ago at Cairo 179 governments committed to an ambitious Programme of Action to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Since then considerable progress has been made in many areas, but we have yet to fulfill the core ICPD goals. Improving access to family planning, maternal health services and comprehensive sexuality education is important for the well-being of all people. Especially crucial this for the young, whose future is affected by the actions taken today.

The 2014 review of the implementation of ICPD and the 2015 assessment of the progress of Millennium Development Goals, present an opportunity to generate faster progress towards the achievement of these international commitments. This requires great political will across continents. To this end, a High Level Task Force for ICPD is being established and will start its work later this year.

We are happy and proud to note that former President of Finland, Ms. Tarja Halonen, together with former President of Mozambique, Mr. Joaquim Chissano, have accepted to co-chair the High-Level Task Force. We are convinced that president Halonen's shown commitment to advance human rights, social equity and gender equality will be of great benefit to the work of HLTF.

The High Level Task Force will work for the advancement of past commitments and to ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights will be central elements of the development agenda post 2014 and 2015. In this process human rights are the core framework. Implicit in the rights-based approach is the idea that every person counts. Everyone, including adolescents and youth, has the right to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and reproduction, free of any type of coercion, discrimination or violence.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are also the cornerstones of women and girls' empowerment. Empowering women is a fundamental goal in itself and the most efficient way in eradicating poverty and stabilizing population growth. Significant development gains can be achieved when women are free to enter the work force and contribute to job creation.

Unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, are a serious threat to the health of the youngest and poorest girls and women. Pregnancy and delivery are the single biggest reason for the death of 15 to 19 year old girls in developing countries. To save their lives, we need to make the Cairo Agenda and MDGs a reality. We need universal access to contraception, strengthening of health systems by integrated and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and access to comprehensive sexuality education for all girls, boys, men and women.

Young people must be equipped with sufficient and accurate knowledge in order to be able to take responsible decisions. Meaningful participation of young people in all levels of decision-making is crucial in ensuring that their needs get taken into account. Investments to youth education and employment, including that of girls, contribute to poverty reduction and are crucial for social and economic development. We are pleased to note that the High Level Task Force for ICPD sees the participation of adolescents and youth a central political and programmatic commitment. Young people are the future parents, teachers, workers and leaders of the world, and their voices must be heard today.

Development targets cannot be achieved without the willingness to contribute significant international and national financial resources to the advancement of sexual and reproductive health and rights. However, these resources should not be seen as a cost, but as a highly beneficial investment promoting both economic growth and well-being of all people, most importantly the youth.

Therefore, I would like to end by affirming Finland's full support for the work of High Level Task Force and its co-chairs President Joaquim Chissano and President Tarja Halonen.