



## Commission on Population and Development Forty-seventh Session

### General debate on National Experiences in Population Matters: Assessment of the Status of Implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD

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Mr President,

Twenty years ago in Cairo, we promised to improve the lives of women and girls, men and boys. We declared that we would reduce child and maternal mortality, provide universal access to education for boys and girls alike, and we promised universal access to reproductive health services, including contraceptives.

We stand by our promises from Cairo because sexual and reproductive health and rights makes sense. It makes sense for the girl who is able to say no to unwanted sex because she is empowered and educated about her body, her sexuality and her rights. It makes sense for the woman who knows how to space her children and can get the contraceptives to do so. It makes sense for the man who is able to be a caring father and a supportive partner. It makes sense for the community that can enjoy social and economic progress.

We welcome the ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review Report, which gives important input to our further work to reach our goals, including the post 2015 agenda.

In Norway, comprehensive sexuality education for young people is taken very seriously. It is provided in schools, at youth clinics, and in connection with general health promotion. Research shows that most young men and women at their sexual debut act responsibly, by using condoms and are on average older than seventeen years old. Furthermore, few girls report that they are forced into sex.

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This means that girls and young women are generally well protected against sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. It means that they are able to continue their education and contribute to economic growth and welfare. This is realisation of sexual and reproductive rights in practice!

Mr President,

We are fully aware that sexuality and reproductive issues are perceived as private and sensitive. However, this should not mean that we shy away from discussing them.

Everywhere in the world, women and girls experience unwanted pregnancies. Some want them to be terminated. If this cannot be done safely, it is done unsafely. If it cannot be done legally, it is done illegally.

Every year around 50 000 women die, and approximately 4 million women suffer the health consequences due to illegal and unsafe abortions.

Girls, who are married off before they are physically, mentally or socially ready for pregnancy, are particularly at risk. We must organise our societies in a way that minimises suffering and prevents unnecessary risks. We have a moral obligation to respect the right of women to self-determination with regard to marriage and childbirth. This must continue to be our promise to the world's women and girls.

Mr President,

Commitments have to be backed by resources and accountability. Governments, in partnership with private actors, need to mobilise resources. We must put in place mechanisms that hold us accountable. Transparent information on progress and reliable statistics are important to this end. Only then will we be able to demonstrate that we are delivering on our commitments. Only then will the ICPD Programme of Action make a real difference for people in their daily lives.

We will continue our political and financial support, and put education and health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, at the top of the development agenda. Based on our common commitments and strong belief in gender equality and human rights.

Let there be no doubt. Norway stands by the promises we made in Cairo 20 years ago.