

Madam/Mister Chair, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. I represent the FEMM Foundation. FEMM is a knowledge-based health program for women inspired by women's right to be informed participants in their own healthcare.

Sustainable cities require the realization of all aspects of development. Health is part of that, as recognized in Sustainable Development Goal 3. Health impacts the personal, social, and economic aspects of people's lives. Poor health can also lead to isolation, even in cities, and prevent people from using their gifts and talents to realize their personal and professional goals. FEMM's mission is to ensure that women's health needs are through health education, medical research, and improving reproductive healthcare.

Women and girls are vulnerable to health problems due to both biological and social reasons. They represent roughly half the population of cities but often struggle to access quality healthcare and have their needs met. Informed consent is a cornerstone of access to quality healthcare; it requires options, information, and understanding. Understanding is key to the other two: a doctor may provide options and information, but if a woman does not understand how her body works and how the proposed options will affect it, she cannot make a truly informed decision.

Women must have access to health education that equips them to make informed choices. This creates an enabling environment for women to make plans about their careers and family lives "free of discrimination, coercion and violence" (ICPD ¶ 7.3). Women who understand their health know when they need help, ask more questions during medical visits, and often receive better care. They can make informed decisions about healthcare, including about treatments want and how to achieve reproductive health goals and desired family size.

Research indicates that only three percent of women can identify key signs of health, such as ovulation. Many do not understand that a delicate interplay of hormones is necessary for good health, and that, therefore, reproductive health concerns can affect wellbeing more broadly through the health-hormone connection. Many women also are told that the symptoms they experience, such as weight gain, depression, migraines, pain, irregular bleeding, and acne are

“normal.” But while these are common, they are not normal. Many of these symptoms indicate underlying hormonal abnormalities, and women who understand their bodies know when they need medical care.

It is not enough to know there is a problem; women need and deserve solutions. By synthesizing existing research and conducting new research, FEMM’s researchers have identified what constitutes sufficient levels for nine essential hormones. They have created a medical management program with diagnostic protocols and treatments that get at the root causes of hormonal imbalances to heal women, giving them the healthcare they deserve.

FEMM has trained over 500 doctors to use these protocols to provide care that treats the root causes of women and girls’ symptoms. Using this data, doctors can pinpoint and treat the underlying hormonal abnormalities that are causing the symptoms. This care can be provided through basic healthcare delivery systems, making implementation efficient and cost-effective. With these treatments, women have not only information and understanding, but also real options.

FEMM’s programs are ready to help make cities sustainable through empowering women so they can make informed choices about their health and family planning. We urge the Members of the Commission to invest in healthcare that meets women’s needs. We stand ready to assist. Thank you.