

AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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52nd Commission on Population and Development

1 April 2019

Australian Statement by Kate Wallace, Assistant Secretary, Health Policy Branch

Firstly, on behalf of the Australian Government, I thank the Chair for his careful work in stewarding the development of an outcome statement for this session of the Commission and for the commitment shown by Member States to negotiate in good faith.

It is particularly important in this 25th anniversary of the ICPD that the Commission comes together to restate its commitment to the principles of a rights based approach to the fundamental issues of development, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Australia remains strongly committed to advancing universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health and rights as a vital cornerstone of achieving broader sustainable, inclusive development.

The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if women and girls continue to be denied the realisation of their human rights and opportunities.

The human case, the economic case and the development, peace and security case for SRHR are profound. Investment in SRHR saves lives, enables women and girls to participate equally in economic and social activity, and enables families to better invest in their children. Stronger, healthier individuals and families are more resilient and more secure, while governments are better positioned to plan and deliver the services people need.

Australia has been concerned, as are other member states, at the failure during the last three sessions to achieve a consensus outcome and at the increasing efforts we have seen to dilute, caveat or eliminate sexual and reproductive health and rights language both in this Commission and in other relevant fora.

If we are genuinely committed to the Sustainable Development Goals, to human rights and equality for all, we must maintain strong normative language, fully uphold rights and be accountable for improving access to services at the national level.

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Australia was pleased to be able to report at the Asia Pacific ICPD Regional Review Conference in Bangkok last year, about our continued progress nationally to ensure: comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services are available to all; our increasing efforts to tackle the root causes of gender based violence on all levels; and the elimination cervical cancer.

We are also continuing to support improved access to quality sexual and reproductive health services through our international development program, including our largest ever investment in the Pacific islands totalling almost \$40 million over 2017-2022, with a focus on reducing unmet need for family planning towards zero by 2030.

We welcome the progress made in a number of ICPD regional reviews and commend countries that continue to make strides in ensuring all women have access to gender sensitive services, the full and equal protection of the law and are supported to reach their full potential.

Australia looks forward to the Universal Health Coverage High Level Meeting in September this year as a critical opportunity to substantially expand access to sexual and reproductive health services by ensuring it is embedded in any outcome resulting from the HLM's work and we hope others will work for this outcome too.

We also express appreciation for the work of the UNFPA and its partners in convening an ICPD+25 Summit in Kenya later this year and hope that this will mark another major step forward, and acceleration in progress towards critical targets in the ICPD and Sustainable Development Goals.

Chair, there are a range of important opportunities before us in 2019 and beyond to make substantial progress in realising the goals of the ICPD and the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals. Australia hopes all governments will fully embrace them.