

Thank you Chair,

I would like to tell you a story about a remarkable person.

My brother Scott.

Scott's 23 years old, and even taller than I am.

But intellectually, he's only 2 years old, and he needs 24-hour care.

Together with my parents, I have been taking care of him my whole life, and I know him better than anyone.

We used to visit the zoo.

He would talk for hours about it afterwards, naming every animal.

Taking care of my brother made me realize at an early age, that the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights is not self-evident.

The only intimacy my brother will ever experience and be able to choose for, will be a hug from my parents, or from me.

Countless young people all over the world similarly encounter barriers in the enjoyment of their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

They lack access to adequate information and education about their bodily autonomy and their sexuality.

This is especially true for marginalized groups, including young women and girls, people from the LGBTQ+-community and people living with disabilities, who are left behind because of stigmas, taboos, and social exclusion.

A precondition for ensuring access to sexual reproductive health and rights for all is access to inclusive Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

As the Dutch Youth Ambassador for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender Equality and Bodily Autonomy, I want to amplify the voice of my generation.

Young people have an important role in identifying what is needed and where opportunities lie. They bring in countless stories from in- and outside this room.

Stories about the lived realities of young people everywhere.

Like the story of a twenty-year-old young woman I recently spoke to.

When she wanted to get contraceptives, her doctor did not take her seriously because she uses crutches.

He assumed that she does not experience sexual desire, as a young woman with a disability.

Imagine not being able to protect yourself, because medical staff do not see you as an equal human being.

Young people from all over the world have all told me the same thing:

How important it is to normalize and destigmatize conversations about our bodies, about our lives, about our sexuality.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education is the only method that provides all young people with the opportunity to overcome these issues.

To know and claim their sexual and reproductive rights.

What does it mean? Inclusive Comprehensive Sexuality Education enables young people to

- learn and think about what is right and safe for them,
- Learn to treat each other with respect and dignity,
- Adopt values of equality, love and kindness,
- And to protect themselves from unsafe situations.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education is crucial for the rights and health of young people.

So, what actions must we take to achieve equal rights and health for all young people? We need to ensure access to quality education, including the roll-out of inclusive Comprehensive Sexuality Education curricula.

And in doing so, to ensure the broadest possible range of participation of young people, especially of those who live in underserved communities in these curricula.

In that way, young people have a better quality of life and have a better opportunity to take good care of their health.

To achieve this, taking initiative in meaningful and inclusive youth participation like appointing your own Youth Ambassador for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, would be a great first step.

Let's make sure that next year, more young people like me sit behind these microphones.

As Youth Ambassador, but also as Scott's brother, I want to reiterate one message:

Include and engage young people meaningfully.

Thank you very much.