

## **Action by Churches Together (ACT Alliance) - ECOSOC CPD56 Oral Statement, to be delivered by Mariela Pereyra, ACT Alliance**

ACT Alliance is a coalition of more than 135 churches and church-related organizations working together in over 120 countries. Gender justice, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, is a priority for the ACT Alliance, and is engaged in all pillars of the ICPD Programme of Action.

We recognize the importance of a joint resolution at the 56th Commission on Population and Development. With the focus on education this year, we must affirm that all people and young people have the right to education. This includes a right to comprehensive sexuality education, which enables children and young people to develop accurate and age-appropriate knowledge, skills, and positive values. Everyone should have the ability to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their lives, including their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence.

84% of the world's population identify with a faith, yet, the potential of faith actors, in all their diversity, to advance Sustainable Development, is often not recognized. Instead, religion is being instrumentalized, to create polarization and resistance to achieving the ICPD commitments. Around the world, faith actors, who are often trusted voices in their communities, are implementing the Programme of Action, and are major health and education providers.

We are working within our own faith communities to amplify rights affirming theologies, transform social norms, and invest in partnerships to address both structural and cultural barriers to achieving reproductive justice for all.

### **We call upon Member States to:**

1. Fully implement and ensure no regression or exception on the full ICPD Programme of Action, and subsequent declarations.
2. Invest in sexual and reproductive justice frameworks, and take targeted action to eliminate structural barriers, discriminatory laws, and social norms that restrict fundamental freedoms and bodily autonomy.
3. Resource multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with grassroots-led feminist and faith-based movements, to affirm Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, including Comprehensive Sexuality Education, and access to sexual and reproductive health services.
4. Reaffirm and fully protect human rights in policies on population, to ensure the human rights of all, regardless of where they are in the world, their age, their gender, their sexual orientation, disability, religion, ethnicity, or any other intersecting factors.
5. Stand up for the integrity of the UN system and to engage in dialogues that move away from polarization and towards collaboration for the benefit of all.

Faith values are, at their core, about the values of dignity, justice, compassion, and love, we urge member states to act with these values, to ensure we "Leave no-one behind".