

56 Commission on Population and Development

Oral Statement

Family Planning New Zealand Association (ECOSOC status)

*Excellencies, honourable delegates, fellow advocates and activists,*

I am pleased to make this statement on behalf of Family Planning New Zealand, a Member of the Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, a regional network that mobilizes civil society advocacy for the advancement of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

This year's focus on education is particularly poignant, given the negative impact of the COVID19 pandemic upon pre-existing structural inequalities and discrimination. In our consideration of building back better, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is one critical driver behind the creation of a more equitable and just world.

We know that certain groups continue to face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and confront greater barriers to their sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as adolescents and young people, migrants and refugees, people living with HIV, sex workers, indigenous people, people living with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans intersex, queer and other gender diverse persons, amongst others.

In a region that is home to ~60% of the world's youth, CSE is a foundation for positive change and sustainable development as it empowers young people to challenge negative social norms, including gender norms, and to be part of broader societal efforts towards gender equality. The evidence shows that when fully implemented CSE not only helps to prevent early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, it enables adolescents and young people to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and achieve bodily autonomy. Yet, while most countries in Asia and the Pacific already implement some form of sexuality education, it is uneven and neither quality nor comprehensive.

Honourable delegates, we commend the progress that has been made in the discussions at this global intergovernmental forum, and urge for increased momentum. Countries in Asia Pacific have another opportunity to discuss and present on challenges and progress towards achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights at the 7 Asia and Pacific Population Conference this November.

We close by calling on Member States to intensify implementation of the Programme of Action in collaboration with civil society and community partners, in the run up to the 30 year celebration of the International Conference on Population and Development.

