



Youth oral statement for the 42nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development 2009

Chairperson and distinguished
representatives,

It is an honor and a privilege to stand before you today as a youth delegate and - in partnership with Action Canada for Population and Development - share perspectives from my generation and those who are younger still.

[Why young people?]

My peers and I make up the largest young generation in history. We may not all have finished school, we may not all be married and we may not share all of our values with older generations but we do have rights and needs that must be addressed.

Indeed, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the goals set at the ICPD in Cairo, you, esteemed representatives of the world's governments, will have to pay attention to us.

Only today, more than three thousand people under the age of 24 have been infected with HIV/AIDS. In fact, young people ages 15-24 account for almost half of all new HIV infections worldwide. Among women aged 15 to 19, pregnancy and its complications are the leading cause of death. The majority of my peers around the world is still misinformed about how to prevent a pregnancy, unsure about how sexually transmitted infections are spread, they lack the skills to stand up for their own sexual and reproductive health, and they have insufficient access to much needed contraceptives and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health care and services.

[What do we want?]

This is why we call upon you. We demand, first of all, to be empowered through comprehensive, evidence informed sexuality education. Knowledge is the only way through which we can free ourselves from ignorance and sometimes harmful traditions. With knowledge we can make informed decisions about having children, marrying or being sexually active.

Secondly, we claim our right to access to effective family planning services and safe abortion for young people. Without this, we will have insufficient autonomy over our lives, in particular to exercise control over our sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Thirdly, we claim our right as agreed on in the ICPD PoA to be meaningfully involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies that touch our lives in the most intimate and direct ways. We are here at the CPD to voice our concerns, needs and openly talk with you.

[Closing]

Ladies and gentlemen, we ask you to move beyond the rhetoric of goals and targets, to take concrete steps. We urge you to encourage your governments to comply with agreements made. And we trust you will take up your responsibility to address young people's needs and rights in the resolution that will be adopted here.

We are the present and the future. No youth means no change.

Thank you.

This youth statement is supported by the following organizations that you can contact for more information.



Choice for Youth and Sexuality

sara@choiceforyouth.org
marina@choiceforyouth.org

www.choiceforyouth.org



Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights

katie@youthcoalition.org
yeranuhi@youthcoalition.org

www.youthcoalition.org



Advocates for Youth

mimi@advocatesforyouth.org
nicole@advocatesforyouth.org

www.advocatesforyouth.org



World Aids Campaign

ahumadac@worldaidscampaign.org

www.worldaidscampaign.org



Action Canada Population

sandeep@acpd.ca

www.acpd.ca



International Planned Parenthood Federation

laur.newyork@gmail.com
brunosolis@gmail.com
comomanyi@gmail.com
ankitsaxena88@gmail.com

www.ippf.com



Elige, Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos and, REDLAC Red Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos A.C.
eligeperla@gmail.com



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cmartinez@mexfam.org.mx