

Agenda item 4

General debate on national experience in population matters: fertility, reproductive health and development

STATEMENT BY THE NETHERLANDS version Tuesday 12 April 2011
ELLY LEEMHUIS – DE REGT

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

The Netherlands welcomes the excellent report of the Secretary-General on Fertility, Reproductive Health and Development. Excellent because it is factual and clear.

Our first message is that this report rings true for the Netherlands, both at a National level and in our role of international donor.

Our national policy experience has taught us about the effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness, of investing in women, in young people, and in vulnerable groups. Comprehensive sexuality education, access to family planning (including to contraceptives and condoms), a continuum of care which includes the legal right to safe abortion, and harm reduction programmes, all have helped couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly on the number, spacing and timing of their children. In addition, due to these national policies the Netherlands has low numbers of teenage pregnancies, of HIV infections, and of abortions.

These national experiences form the basis for our policies as a donor. Sexual and reproductive health and rights including HIV/AIDS, is one out of four international policy priorities of the Dutch government. In the Netherlands, pragmatism has led to good results. Pragmatism (always within individual

country context) also forms a key principle in our international SRHR policy. Our support includes family planning, education and support to young people.

In this light, we very much welcome the recent initiatives of various organisations to share best practices of reproductive health worldwide. There is the PMNCH database of best practices on maternal health from countries all over the world. There is the Africa Progress Panel policy brief on maternal health. We believe this is an important publication which contains not only national best practices from Africa and elsewhere, but also concrete Key Approaches. There is also the H4 report which outlines maternal health services packages at various levels, including at community level.

As the Netherlands, we partner with national governments, with civil society and NGOs (national and international), with international organisations, as well as with the private sector. Publications like the ones I mentioned, are extremely helpful and practical tools to inform such partnerships. They provide knowledge we need. They also strengthen us in our conviction that progress on global reproductive health is indeed possible.

Our second message is to underline the conclusion of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the key importance of investing in young people. The unprecedented number of young people in today's world, also holds an unprecedented opportunity for global health, as well as for sustainable development. We need to step up investing in young people. We need to also support meaningful participation by young people themselves, including in decision making processes. The Dutch representative to the Global Fund, a position we created, is one example of this. And the Dutch youth NGO representatives that are here are also partners of us.

Reproductive health information, education, services and commodities (including male and female condoms), are all crucial tools to help young women and men to reach their full potential, so as to help shape the world that is already theirs.

I thank you.