



Commission on Population and Development Forty-fourth session

13 April 2011

Agenda item 5: General debate on the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in the light of its twentieth anniversary.

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Ambassador
Permanent Representative

The ICPD Programme of Action outlines the types of health services that are required, most importantly family planning, care for women in relation to pregnancies, safe deliveries and safe abortions, as well as prevention and care for sexually transmitted infections.

ICPD also underlines the need to improved education and for gender equality. It requires us to promote social justice and to invest in sexual and reproductive health that saves lives and secures health, primarily for women. Such policies are also essential for growth and prosperity. And lack of such policies and investment is holding countries down.

We all agree that unwanted pregnancies should be avoided. But all of us also know that unwanted pregnancies do occur.

We therefore have an obligation, not least a moral obligation, to ensure that all women have the right to safe abortion, that is, abortion carried out by a skilled professional with adequate equipment and medication.

Legalizing abortion is the only way to protect this right for all, not least the poor.

We know more about the effects of abortion legislation. WHO has documented that criminalizing abortion leads to more women dying. And those who support such policy carry the responsibility

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for these deaths. Steps should therefore be taken to liberalize abortion laws, and as a minimum decriminalize women who have had illegal abortions.

We also know that heterosexuality is not the only way human beings express their love and affection. Sexual diversity is a fact of life in every country. We have also learned more about the suffering of individuals and families caused by discrimination and harassment of people who have a sexual orientation that differs from the mainstream. Sexual rights are human rights, and should be ensured for all human beings.

It was an important step forward when the ICPD underlined sexual health as enhancing life. This was a clear statement that the global community can deal with sexuality as a literally vital aspect of development.

As the largest generation of adolescents ever in history is entering sexual and reproductive life, it is imperative that they are provided with comprehensive gender sensitive sexuality education, both in schools, in communities and families. We need to provide comprehensive services, free of charge for young people. User fees are in effect preventing millions of young people from having access to essential services.

If not, we will see higher rates of young people suffering and dying. Cultural or so called moral barriers to responsible knowledge-based policies become hypocrisy in the light of these human costs of inaction.

More than 200 million women worldwide who do not want to get pregnant do not have access to modern and efficient methods of family planning. One in four women who want to avoid a pregnancy is not using a modern method. By meeting the needs of these women we can accelerate the improvement of maternal and child health. Effectively addressing the unmet need would result in 150 000 fewer maternal deaths and 25 million fewer induced abortions yearly.

Sexuality and reproduction are fundamentally ethical issues, in all societies. They are existential issues for individuals, families and societies. Policies must be built on solid knowledge. We must therefore fight forces that are seeking to prevent openness in this field as well as perversion of knowledge, by instilling fear and exploiting ignorance.

Religions are concerned with well-being of people. We therefore are concerned by misuse of religions and ideologies leading to unnecessary suffering and deaths of thousands. We should join forces in a humane approach to securing healthy sexual and reproductive lives.

The ICPD is our common platform for action based on the diverse norms and situations that we all are part of. We all have a responsibility to safeguard its goals for better lives for girls and boys, women and men, and to secure resources for its full implementation as a matter of urgency.

Thank you for your attention.