

48th Commission on Population and Development (13-17th April 2015)  
Agenda Item 4. General debate on national experience in population matters: realizing the future we want: integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the post-2015 development agenda

Statement by Finland

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Finland aligns herself with the statement delivered by Latvia on behalf of the European Union.

**To build a better future, we need to realize the rights and needs of young people.**

**Firstly, young people need to be fully involved in decision-making on issues related to their own lives.** We need to secure effective platforms for meaningful participation for young people, and empower them to speak up and stand up for their rights. If young people cannot decide for themselves on their most private matters, how can we expect them to be able to take broader responsibility for sustainable development?

**Secondly, sexual and reproductive health and rights need to be realized as an integral part of human rights.** Young people **should** have the right to youth-friendly health services, which include sexual, and reproductive services, as well as an access to a full range of modern contraceptives. Health services need to be affordable and accessible without a fear of discrimination, coercion, violence or stigma. Finland also emphasizes the importance of comprehensive sexuality education as a basis for informed decisions. Investing in sexual and reproductive health and rights increase the health and well-being of adolescents and youth, as well as benefits their families, communities and entire Nations.

Madam Chair,

**The world we live in is characterized by inequality. Far too many individuals are being left behind. Especially adolescent girls face multiple challenges that seriously impact their future.** Child, early and forced marriages remain a strong factor underlying early pregnancies. Reducing adolescent pregnancies and addressing the various factors underlying these, are essential for improving sexual and reproductive health and rights.

**Challenges are universal, and the responsibility is shared.** In Finland, the number of socially excluded youth has increased. Both the unemployment rate and the demand for psycho-social services among the youth have increased too.

**Today's generation of youth is the largest in history. If we want to build a better future, we should not waste their potential.**

Thank you.