

## ISRRC Oral Statement – CPD 48

My name is Saida Ali and I work with the International Women's Health Coalition, an organization with special consultative status with ECOSOC. I am speaking on behalf of the International Sexual and Reproductive Rights Caucus.

Sustainable development will only occur when all individuals fully realize their human rights, including sexual rights. Governments agreed more than 20 years ago that human rights include the right to have control over and decide freely on all matters related to one's sexuality, free from coercion, discrimination, and violence.

Attempts by others to control the sexuality of girls and women violate their human rights on a daily basis. These violations include sexual and gender-based violence, stigma and discrimination, limitations on mobility, and denial of meaningful participation in public life, among others. Furthermore, lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, sex workers, and people living with HIV and AIDS face these and other profound violations of their human rights, simply because they are seen to transgress prevailing sexual, gender, and other norms.

For young people and adolescents, especially those who belong to the most marginalized, vulnerable and stigmatized populations, many social and economic barriers continue to impede the full realization of their sexual rights. It is during this critical life stage, a time of learning, "firsts", and – all too often – of violence, abuse and discrimination, that protection and fulfilment of sexual rights are urgently needed. Non-judgmental, and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education are essential to enable young people to challenge harmful gender norms, learn about and claim their rights, and navigate healthy relationships.

It is clear: sexual rights underpin the enjoyment of all other human rights and are a prerequisite for equality, justice and sustainable development, including the rights to health, education, housing, and employment. In many cases, sexual rights violations and discrimination based on sexuality compromise individuals' economic opportunities and lead to or exacerbate poverty. How can the SDG targets on inequalities, which aim to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, be met when sexual rights continue to be violated?

Encouragingly, increasing numbers of governments are recognizing the importance of sexual rights and putting in place laws and policies to protect them at the country level. For example, in the past few years Uruguay legalized abortion upon demand without restriction until the 12th week of pregnancy; Malta adopted a visionary gender identity and expression law, recognizing a universal right to physical integrity; several countries, such as Sweden, Denmark, and Argentina, have undertaken other important legislative changes; and more countries are taking steps necessary to provide comprehensive sexuality education for all adolescents and youth.

At the regional level, sexual rights have been recognized in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific and in Africa. At the 47<sup>th</sup> Commission on Population and Development in April 2014, 59 countries voiced support for sexual rights in plenary discussions. In addition, during the Open Working Group, 58 countries signed on to a statement calling for sexual rights to be included in the Sustainable Development Goals.

For all of us, here and across the world, it is critical to have respect and protection of our right to have control over our own bodies and our sexuality, without any form of stigma, discrimination, coercion, or violence. Only with this foundation can we fully contribute to sustainable development, realize gender equality, fully participate in our communities and nations, and universally enjoy all of our other human rights, equality and justice.

It is critical that we build on the gains we have made so far, and build on the momentum that exists. This is the time; right here, right now, at CPD 48 and during this critical moment in the post-2015 process, more than twenty years after Cairo. It is high time that our language and policies adapt to the realities and needs of our people. We decisively call on you to recognize and uphold our sexual rights – for our sake and for the sake of all humankind. The time is now.

#### Endorsements – International Sexual and Reproductive Rights Caucus

##### ECOSOC-Accredited Organizations

1. ActionAid
2. Advocates for Youth
3. AIDOS - Italian Association for Women in Development
4. Amnesty International
5. Catolicas por el derecho a decidir
6. Centro de Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos - PROMSEX
7. dance4llife
8. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
9. DSW (German Foundation for World Population)
10. Family Care International
11. Federation for Women and Family Planning, Poland and ASTRA Network
12. FOKUS - Forum for Women and Development - Norway
13. Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer (FEIM)
14. International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
15. International Planned Parenthood Federation
16. International Women's Health Coalition
17. Ipas
18. New Zealand Family Planning Association
19. PAI
20. Planned Parenthood Federation of America
21. Réseau jeunesse population et développement du Sénégal (RESOPOPDEV)
22. RESURJ - Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice
23. Rutgers WPF
24. Swedish Association for Sexuality Education
25. The Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
26. Väestöliitto - Family Federation of Finland
27. Women Deliver
28. Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights

##### Other

1. African Woman and Child Feature Service Kenya
2. Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (APA)

3. Asociasion Gojooven Guatemala
4. Balance
5. Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal
6. Centre for the Study of Adolescence (Kenya)
7. CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality
8. Coordinadora Lésbica y de Hombres Trans, COLEHT, Dominican Republic
9. Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, Fiji/Pacific
10. Federacion Planificacion Familiar Estatal Spain
11. Fortress of Hope Africa
12. Gestos-HIV, Communication and Gender
13. Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA)
14. Grupo Impulsor Cairo + 20 Guatemala
15. International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW)
16. MenEngage Alliance
17. Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres de Puerto Rico
18. Network for Adolescents and Youth of Africa
19. Organizacion de mujeres tierra viva
20. Paramount Young Women Initiative Liberia
21. Republika Libre, Dominican Republic
22. Rutgers WPF Pakistan
23. Sex og Politikk - the Norwegian association for sexual and reproductive health and rights
24. Simavi
25. Taller Salud, Puerto Rico
26. The YP Foundation
27. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (USA)
28. Women For a Change Cameroon
29. YECE, Malawi
30. YouAct, European Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights
31. Young Women's Leadership Institute (YWLI)
32. Youth Changers Kenya
33. Youth Coalition for Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
34. Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO)