

To: UN Commission on Population and Development

From: World Council of Churches

**Re.: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in the Context of
Changing Population Age Structures and Sustainable Development**

Presenter: Jillian Abballe, World Council of Churches

- 1. The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches works for all to have life in abundance protected by the universal human rights. Upholding and defending women's rights is essential for ensuring life of dignity for all, women and men alike. We recognise that the Christian Tradition has resources to affirm the need to protect sexual and reproductive health of women. We also acknowledge that there are social, religious and cultural controversies about these issues and that subsequent inaction in addressing them has a detrimental impact on social equity and sustainable development. Yet we affirm that it is our basic responsibility as churches and faith-based organisations (FBOs) to promote each person's inherent dignity as part of the divine creation.**
- 2. The significance of churches and FBOs in this context cannot be overemphasized. We have strong and self-sustaining health care networks that reach to the grassroots and the hardest-to-reach beneficiaries of sexual and reproductive health services. In many developing countries, Christian Health Associations are an integral part of the health infrastructure, and comprise up to 40% of health-care provision through which women and girls access (or are barred from accessing) sexual and reproductive health care.**
- 3. We commit to constantly challenging those teachings, beliefs and practices that do not promote abundant life for all, including those with vulnerabilities connected to sexual and reproductive health.**
- 4. WCC-CCIA calls on the Commission, member states, civil society and the private sector to act now to:**
 - Recognize the important role of faith in transforming teachings, beliefs and practices that can support the appropriate care for sexual and reproductive health particularly for women.**
 - Recognize gender justice and sexual and reproductive health as essential components of the right to health for all.**
 - Ensure that every birth is safe, and support provision of related health care services, including treatment and care for people living with HIV and AIDS.**
 - Prevent FGM, early and forced marriage and improve national legal frameworks and enforce child marriage laws where they already exist.**
 - Ensure people everywhere have the knowledge needed to care for his or her body, including age- and culture-appropriate sexuality education, with special attention to the health, education and participation of youth and adolescents.**