



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail australia@un.int

150 East 42nd Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 www.unny.mission.gov.au

Fifty-fourth Session of the Commission on Population and Development

Australia National Statement

The Australian Government commends the Chair of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Population and Development and his Bureau for their efforts. We are very pleased that in 2020, the Commission will adopt an outcome document.

Australia remains firmly committed to implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the outcomes of its reviews and to accelerating progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The special theme of this session, ‘Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development’ is of critical importance and intersects in a myriad of ways across the spectrum of human development. The intersection with the mandate of this Commission – to monitor, review and assess the implementation of the ICPD and its focus on realising a rights-based approach to human health and reproductive issues – is clear.

Individuals, families, communities and nations are better able to thrive and realise their potential, by achieving their own, and their families’ nutritional needs. This is impacted by their capacity to make informed decisions around their sexual and reproductive health, including the timing and spacing of pregnancies. Women and girls’ health is better protected when their nutritional requirements are met, particularly for adolescent girls and for women and girls experiencing pregnancy.

Women and girls continue to face unequal access to adequate nutritious food and to decision making regarding food production and in the management of food systems. This must change. Their nutritional status is consistently lower in many parts of the world and this has implications for their health and wellbeing, the health and development of their children and their communities. This impacts on our common goal of realising gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals.

For these reasons it is important that we continue to underscore the links between food security, nutrition, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender equality and support language and actions that reflect our commitment to the realisation of the ICPD Program of Action in this forum.

We encourage the Commission to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights remain firmly at the centre of its work and that we continue to use these opportunities to drive forward this critical agenda in the Decade of Action towards 2030.

Alarmingly, we are witnessing in many countries the unwinding of decades of progress towards universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights as the result of COVID-19. The pandemic has severely disrupted supply chains and health services across the world. Initial data for the first half of 2020 indicates millions of women and girls lost access to services. Correlated to this, there is evidence of an increase in adverse outcomes including still births, maternal death and injury and unplanned pregnancy in 2020.

It is critical that national and global COVID-19 response plans effectively address these issues and accelerate efforts to reduce unmet need for comprehensive, quality, sexual and reproductive health services and rights. In this respect, full implementation of the Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage agreed in September 2019 is also essential to ensuring everyone has the essential services they need to thrive, including sexual and reproductive health services.

We remain concerned about the use of sovereignty clauses in outcome documents. While we understand their intent, their effect can be to undermine the principles of the ICPD Program of Action and our commitments to Universal Health Coverage which call for all people to be able to attain the highest possible standard of health and to have the information, education and access to services they need to achieve this.