

## **Statement Kingdom of the Netherlands for the 54<sup>th</sup> Commission on Population and Development**

Dear Chair, Excellencies,

The Netherlands is concerned about the perpetuation of inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis jeopardize our promise to women, girls and young people all over the world that we will leave no one behind, and to achieve the goals of the ICPD and the SDGs.

While committing to improve food security and nutrition at this CPD, we must acknowledge that gender inequality and women's and girls' unequal access to health, education and resources, are at the root of these challenges.

Because what do we see: Women can no longer access the contraceptives they need. 12 million women around the world lost access to family planning services, leading to 1.4 million additional unintended pregnancies including many among adolescents. 10 million additional girls are at risk of child marriage. When an, often undernourished young girl gets pregnant, her and her child's life chances are slim.

This is how too many women and girls get trapped in an intergenerational cycle of poverty.

The figures are even more staggering, considering that we know how to make a difference in the lives of these women and girls. 27 years of the ICPD agenda have taught us to put people's rights first to decide about their sexual and reproductive rights and their bodily autonomy. When people have the ability to make decisions about their own life, body and future, it benefits societies at large.

It is time to challenge the status quo. That is why I share this statement with Lisa de Pagter, the Netherlands Youth Ambassador for SRHR, gender equality and bodily autonomy.

[Lisa de Pagter]

Thank you Kitty.

Young people, are particularly hit by all these crises. They lack the resources or independence to make decisions about their own lives, bodies and futures.

Schools close. Their income dried up. Food insecurity looms. Many in my generation are at risk of being married off. And their futures become even more unstable. Worsened by early pregnancy and restricted access to contraceptives and safe abortion. Young people, too, are at risk of getting stuck in the poverty trap.

But it is also young people that are the major drivers to get out of this pandemic better and to effectively deal with the climate crisis.

Yet, very few countries have an age balance in decision-making. In fact, I bet I am the youngest person addressing you here today. That shouldn't be the case.

The pandemic shows us that inequalities only deepen in times of crises, it also provides momentum. A window for change. We have an opportunity to pave the way towards more inclusive, more just, and more sustainable communities.

It is therefore that I call upon all of you to fully, effectively and meaningfully include young people, in the decision-making processes of your country. Because only then we can address the root causes of inequality and build a more sustainable future for all. Only then we can achieve the ICPD agenda and fulfill the promises we made in Nairobi.

Thank you.