

**Draft Oral Statement for the UN Commission on Population and Development 54**  
*To be delivered by Claudia Marcela Gomez, ACT Alliance Gender Justice Programme*

Action by Churches Together (ACT Alliance) is a coalition of more than 135 churches and church-related organisations working together in over 120 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people regardless of their religion, politics, gender, race or nationality.

**We stand up for the integrity of the United Nations and the importance of multilateralism and embrace cooperation as the means to resolve global injustices.**

As a faith motivated and rights-based alliance, we believe that all people are rights-holders and our action as a faith-based constituency adheres to the principle that universal and indivisible human rights are the cornerstone of international human rights legislation as emphasized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

**We are committed to the ICPD Programme of Action.** We call upon Member States to move this agenda forward, and commit to non-regression on previously agreed language in the context of food security, nutrition and sustainable development, to ensure access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and protection from Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

**The COVID-19 pandemic and the related aftershocks are pushing women and girls in all their diversity further into poverty.** To address the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we call upon Member States to develop and implement ambitious gender sensitive national plans, which address the interconnections and interdependence between sexual and reproductive health, human rights and Sustainable Development Goals.

**We advocate for the integration of nutrition into family planning programmes to achieve healthier pregnancies and birth outcomes.** Gender discrimination is a critical element in access to adequate nutrition and food. In many places, women and girls are the last to eat and are denied certain nutritious foods due to taboos while pregnant or breastfeeding.

**Finally, it is crucial to promote and strengthen strategies to engage faith leaders, actors and communities, in the ICPD Programme of Action.** Faith-based actors often provide critical services during times of crisis at a community level, including food insecurity, and have access where governments have difficulty in ensuring an institutional presence. Members of the ACT Alliance are working as faith actors to transform societal norms, harmful attitudes related to gender roles and work on critical theological understandings that deconstruct gender stereotypes, promote women's rights, bodily integrity and agency, and contribute to equality and justice for all genders.