

The future role and organization of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD)

The International Planned Parenthood Federation Western Hemisphere Region (IPPFWHR) together with its partners FUSA (Argentina), Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir Colombia (CDD-Colombia), Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir México (CDD-Mexico), and Iniciativas Sanitarias (Uruguay) as well as the Latin American and the Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN) align with the written inputs submitted by the International Sexual and Reproductive Rights Coalition (ISRRC). We welcome the initiative by the Chair of the 53rd Session of the Commission on Population (CPD) to discuss and review the Commission's working methods, and to seek the views of civil society organizations in this discussion.

As an intersectional feminist ecosystem centered around the rights and needs of women and girls, we strongly advocate for the full, effective, and accelerated implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA) and the outcomes of its review conferences. We highly value the critical work of the Commission as the only intergovernmental body entrusted with monitoring the full implementation of the Cairo agenda. Therefore, it is critical that CPD remains as a space for political dialogue on ways to move forward the ICPD agenda and Member States' mutual accountability, as well as to review progress grounded on evidence-based technical discussions.

We commend the Chair as well as all Member States who have expressed their support for civil society representatives to share our inputs on this matter, and value our inclusion to participate as observers in the brainstorming session for Member States held on January 28. We strongly recommend the Commission to consider this as a model to be considered during negotiations. By allowing civil society organizations (CSOs) to participate as observers during informal consultations (following the practice of the Human Rights Council and the Open Working Group sessions) adds much needed transparency to the process.

We would like to offer responses to the questions posed by the Bureau.

Given that the Commission is the only intergovernmental forum focused on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in the United Nations, how can we improve its work to better assist Member States and the international community at large in advancing the ICPD agenda while contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

- The Commission should seek opportunities to actively engage with a broader group of stakeholders, in particular women, youth, local, and feminist organizations, to provide additional perspectives in designated spaces as well as in multi-stakeholder panels. A multi-sectoral approach is necessary to face the world's current complex population and development challenges.
- The Commission should ensure meaningful participation of civil society beyond country delegations to guarantee that both the ICPD and Agenda 2030 are achieved and owned by all sectors.
- The Commission should enact mechanisms that would make civil society participation more inclusive and accessible, including taking into account language barriers and aiming for equitable geographical representation.
- The Commission should strengthen its accountability role, regularly examining progress of the ICPD PoA's aspects in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals as stated in the 2030 Agenda itself. In our view, the work of CPD is not to be replaced by existing Agenda 2030 follow-up mechanisms. There should be complementarity instead.
- The Commission should take advantage of virtual modalities to engage a broader range of stakeholders, particularly civil society. As the COVID-19 pandemic reduces opportunities for in-person interactions while opening new doors for virtual participation, the Commission must ensure civil society full and effective participation offline and online, including in future sessions.

Population and development issues and trends, including drivers and impacts, have important implications for the further implementation of the Programme of Action and the achievement of the SDGs. What role can the Commission play in guiding Member States and the international community in responding to these issues and trends?

- The Commission should pay special attention to emerging regional and national issues, particularly in preparation for the session. This would also be an opportunity to engage with the

regional Economic and Social Commissions as well as UNFPA country offices giving them a more prominent role throughout the process.

- The Commission should ensure data-driven processes with a particular emphasis on data disaggregated by gender as the COVID-19 pandemic has evidenced the disproportionate impact on women and girls which has negatively affected access to sexual and reproductive health services and caused a surge of gender-based violence (GBV).

In order to address the above questions and issues, would it be desirable or feasible for the Commission to adjust its methods of work (organizational aspects, substantive elements, outcome)? If so, could the practices and experiences of other subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) provide any guidance?

Substantive dimensions

Regional dimensions

- The Commission should pay greater attention to ICPD’s regional reviews which would ultimately allow for a better exchange of ideas among regions. Regional analysis of progress with global perspectives may also improve linkages and cooperation with sub-regional and national efforts. As of today, some of the more progressive ICPD intergovernmental agreements were adopted at the regional level through the ICPD beyond 2014.
- The Commission should consider instituting regional accountability mechanisms similar to what the Latin America and Caribbean region is already doing with “[Mira que te Miro](#)” to follow-up the Montevideo Consensus.
- The Commission should also consider establishing institutional mechanisms to seek regular feedback and inputs from the Regional Economic Commissions on progress in implementing the ICPD PoA.

Civil society participation

- The Commission should consider having dedicated civil society spaces during its annual sessions as civil society organizations not only provide dynamism and enrich discussions, but are fundamental in connecting the ICPD Agenda to realities on the ground.
- The Commission should give due consideration to the role of civil society in advancing the ICPD PoA at the national and local levels.
- The Commission should ensure that women, young women, girls and adolescents’ girls, including those from African descent, indigenous women and girls, and women and girls with disabilities, are involved in discussions not only at civil society dedicated spaces but also during briefings, panels, and side events.

Outcome

The CPD is a critical space for enabling discussions and reaching agreements on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), which is essential to the implementation of the ICPD PoA and the outcome of its review conferences. It is critical that the Commission adopts negotiated outcomes in every session as they are used by civil society to contribute shaping realities and driving changes on the ground that impact the health and lives of all women and girls. Negotiated outcomes demonstrate not only political commitments to the ICPD agenda but also to the people it is meant to empower and protect. Unfortunately, Chair Summaries do not carry the same political weight and lack clear programmatic directions for Member States’ action .

It is regrettable that achieving an outcome has not been possible for several years now. This jeopardizes progress on the implementation of the ICPD PoA.

The argument that contentious issues such as SRHR should not be included in negotiations is inherently flawed. SRHR is at the core of the ICPD agenda and must then be included in outcome documents and discussions. Addressing emerging issues in this agenda is also critical to stay relevant.

The Commission should consider enabling voting mechanisms to achieve an outcome when consensus is not reached. This could imply voting on a certain paragraph as well as the text as whole.

We are aware that much remains to be done to fully realize the ICPD agenda and to guarantee SRHR for all women and girls, but there are also great opportunities ahead if the Commission remains as a political and action-oriented space. Additionally, supporting civil society is key in this process. CSOs have been, and will continue to be, instrumental in supporting the implementation of the ICPD PoA, playing a key role in advocacy, both partnering with governments and holding them accountable on international agreements; engaging with historically marginalized communities to deliver services; developing best practices and providing technical advice to strengthen health systems. Civil society and feminist organizations have also resisted and worked around efforts to reverse hard-won gains in advancing the Cairo agenda, and will continue to do so. We look forward to continuing working and contributing to this discussion.