

Chairperson and distinguished representatives,

I am speaking to you today on behalf of the Arab Youth Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and members of the CPD47 Youth Caucus.

I have an important task and value the opportunity to represent numbers of youth activists from around the world operating at national, regional and global levels, to ensure that when it comes to the ICPD Beyond 2014 and the Post-2015 Development Agendas, we have a voice.

We as young people call on all Member States to ensure that young people everywhere have access to comprehensive sexuality education as part of our sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education is essential for young people to be able to make responsible and informed decisions and experience fulfilment and satisfaction in our sexual and reproductive lives. Comprehensive sexuality education supports us in all aspects of our sexuality, preventing unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, HIV and sexually transmitted infections. Comprehensive sexuality education encourages young people to promote values of tolerance, mutual respect and non-violence in relationships.

Comprehensive sexuality education must be part of our lives. This point has been made clear in the ICPD Global Review, Regional outcomes and Thematic outcomes; and is in line with the Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration, the voice of young people.

And yet, comprehensive sexuality education is still lacking in countries and regions where it is most needed. In many cases, discourses of cultural relativism and sovereignty are being used as barriers at alarming rates. Culture is a dynamic and complicated process and does not have one single meaning. More importantly, it is unacceptable to use culture as a justification to deny young people our rights, specifically our sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Member states should in fact commit to enact and implement laws and policies that respect and protect sexual and reproductive rights for all individuals without discrimination on any grounds. This includes ensuring equal access to a comprehensive, accessible, and integrated package of sexual and reproductive health services, and the realization of universal access to comprehensive sexuality education for all young people.

Culture cannot be invoked in incidents of gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage, marital rape, sexual violence and violence in conflict situations or to deny access to safe and legal abortion and post-abortion health care.

We must act now to break down barriers, which include parental consent and age restrictions. We must act now to guarantee comprehensive sexuality education for all young people everywhere.

Access to comprehensive sexuality education benefits societies at all levels, underpins effective development initiatives and places countries in a stronger position to achieve sustained and accelerated economic growth.

Access to comprehensive sexuality education is an essential part of young people's human rights, and is integral to ensuring that young people are healthy, empowered, and able to make informed choices about our lives today, tomorrow and beyond 2014. Thank you.

This statement was delivered on behalf of the undersigned endorsing organizations:

Advocates for Youth
AfriYan
Africa Young Positives Network
Alianza de Juventudes Rumbo a Cairo +20
Amnesty International
ASEAN Youth Movement/Forum
Asian Pacific Resource & Research Center for Women (ARROW)
Astra Youth
Belize Youth Empowerment for Change
Bishkek Feminist Collective SQ, Kyrgyzstan
Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP)
CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality
CIVICUS
Fortress of Hope, Kenya
Global Youth Action Network
Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA)
GOBelize Alumni Association
GOJoven Honduras
Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association
GNP+
Health Education and Research Association (HERA), Macedonia
incorruptibles Colombia
Independent Young People Alliance (ARI), Indonesia
Instituto Cultural Steve Biko, Brazil
International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC)
Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network
Kyrgyz Indigo, Kyrgyzstan
Labrys, Kyrgyzstan
Network for Adolescent and Youth of Africa
NGOs Coalition Against FGM
Parche Juventudes Rumbo Cairo +20
Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice (RESURJ)
Reproductive Health Alliance in Kyrgyzstan
South Asia Regional Youth Network
TakingITGlobal
UNFPA – Youth Advisory Group, Suriname
World Assembly of Youth (WAY)
Women For A Change (WFAC), Cameroon
Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)
Women Health Foundation, Indonesia
World Young Women's Christian Association (WYWCA)
YouAct: European Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights
Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR)
Youth Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights for All
Youth Peer Education Network (Y-PEER)
Youth Sexual Awareness for Europe (YSAFE)