



IFMSA

International Federation of
Medical Students' Associations

Oral Statement of:

International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) to the 47th Session of the Commission on Population and Development

My name is Kelly Thompson and I am speaking on behalf of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, an organization that represents over 1 million medical students in 110 countries worldwide.

I would like to begin this statement with a story from a young medical student in Ghana:

"As medical students, we come face to face with the consequences of young people who face barriers to their sexual and reproductive health rights. We have come to realize that these stories are not just particular to our own countries, but to many other parts of the world. We therefore need to tell more of these stories, with one voice. We the youth have the voice, and the required medium to produce echoes in every part of the world. The young girl I found unconscious in the Obstetrics and Gynaecology ward two weeks ago cannot tell her story of how her perforated uterus lead to sepsis and death following an unsafe abortion. We need to tell her story for her and the stories of so many other young people just like us, who are suffering in silence. Let us tell these stories, and let us tell them so loud that our leaders out there will have no choice but to listen."

As I have the privilege to speak to leaders from around the world I call on you to recognise the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights outside of the confines of this room, beyond the negotiating tables of the UN in the villages and cities of your countries, where women and girls, men and boys are every day suffering due to the denial of their basic human rights.

IFMSA believes that sexual and reproductive rights, including sexual orientation and gender identity, are inalienable human rights. Stigmatisation of, and discrimination against, people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity is a social determinant of health that affects an unacceptable health inequity. Embracing diversity and countering discrimination against LGBTQI persons is a necessary and important step towards health equality for all members of society.

Further, IFMSA believes it is a woman's human right to have full autonomy over decisions relating to when and how many children she has. It is our collective priority to ensure that there be safe avenues for her to enact this choice. IFMSA recognises access to safe and legal abortion as an essential part of reproductive healthcare that empowers women to enact their universal right to health and wellbeing.





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Alarmed by the continuing poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes amongst young people, especially the disproportionate incidence of HIV in those aged 15-24 years and the increased risk of maternal mortality in females under 15 years, IFMSA recognise that access to high quality Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is a right of young people. We further acknowledge that CSE provides young people with the opportunity to protect themselves from potential adverse sexual, reproductive and mental health outcomes.

IFMSA strongly condemns gender-based violence (GBV) in all its forms. IFMSA believes that GBV prevents the full development of society and the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We also recognize the negative aspects of traditional gender roles and harmful cultural practices including, but not limited to, female genital mutilation. IFMSA believes that national laws prohibiting early marriages prevent early pregnancies and poor reproductive health outcomes.

Early marriages, unsafe abortion and adolescent pregnancies perpetuate poverty and affects the capabilities of the current and future generations, addressing these issues are vital in ensuring healthy lives at all stages and in the upholding of basic human rights.

I end with a call to you, when making your decisions, and implementing laws and policies to think of that young girl in Ghana, lying unconscious in the hospital, the consequence of barriers to accessing her rights and work with us to make sure everyone, everywhere will have full access to their rights.

IFMSA at a Glance

Founded in 1951, the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) is the world's oldest and largest independent organization representing medical students from around the world. With an estimated membership of 1.2 million medical students, IFMSA currently maintains 117 National Member Organizations from more 110 countries. IFMSA is recognized as an international nongovernmental organization by the United Nations and the World Health Organization and is a proud partner of various international bodies such as the World Medical Association.

Created to make a positive impact on the world, IFMSA has inspired generations of medical students to develop knowledge, skills, and attitude needed take on current and emerging challenges in medicine and global health. Annually, IFMSA provides opportunities to medical students through its two general assemblies, five regional meetings, around 10,000 exchange program slots, hundreds of national and international projects, and dozens of international campaigns on issues ranging from climate change to global health equity.

