



**NGO statement on behalf of Rutgers WPF and Partners  
for the 47<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development  
Delivered on April 10<sup>th</sup> by Natasha Sajjad**

I present, on behalf of a cross-regional group of civil society advocates from Asia, Africa and the Arab world, the following messages and demands:

Sexual and reproductive rights are human rights. The lack of universal access to sexual and reproductive health services; the lack of comprehensive sexuality education, and the perpetuation of violence and discrimination are violations of these human rights. These violations are unacceptable yet prevalent all over the world.

Asia is home to half of the world's young people. And for many of them, the promises of Cairo are far from realised. We can cite many reasons for these gaps, including rising conservatism and inadequate financing, but one reason remains salient: these promises have not been fulfilled because our governments lack political will. We **have** to move with the times, to meet the demands of today and tomorrow, to truly do what it takes to meet the needs and fulfil the rights of Asia's youth.

For Arab states, time has come to realize the calls for change that resounded throughout the region. It's time for freedom and dignity to be ensured for everyone without discrimination and marginalization - particularly of women, young people, migrants, people with disabilities, and non-conforming gender and sexual minorities.

Countries from the Arab region are voicing reservations on sexual and reproductive health and rights by citing national sovereignty, culture, and religion but these can no longer be used as excuses for violence or the infringement of rights for any group of people.

The countries of Africa must reaffirm the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development. African governments must ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights for all people including rural populations, persons with disabilities, adolescent girls, out of school youth, sex workers, migrants, displaced populations, indigenous people, people living with HIV, older people, and people of different sexual orientations and gender identities are respected and



fulfilled.

- To ensure the realisation of sexual and reproductive health and rights of all the people of Asia, Africa and the Arab region, we have the following recommendations for their Governments:
- Ensure universal access to education, including evidence based gender sensitive comprehensive sexuality education
- Ensure access to a comprehensive package of youth friendly sexual and reproductive health services based on individual choices including safe and legal abortion services.
- Empower and meaningfully engage youth, and particularly young women, in the decision-making processes on policies and programs that affect their lives.
- Eliminate and address all forms of violence and discrimination
- Remove reservations and show full commitment to ICPD Programme of Action and other relevant conventions.

Our regions must stand united for sexual and reproductive health and rights. Standing united here at the 47<sup>th</sup> Commission on Population and Development will help us to make a difference in our own countries.

We call on Governments from all regions to support us in our cause of achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, today, tomorrow, beyond 2014 and beyond 2015.

