

Action Canada for Population and Development

Chairperson and distinguished representatives,

We, the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, with the support of Action Canada for Population and Development congratulate the Commission on Population and Development for focusing the efforts of the 45th session on 'Adolescents and Youth' and congratulate those governments that made youth an integral part of their delegations.

During this important session, we urge governments to not only reaffirm their commitments made in the ICPD Programme of Action but also to advance on issues that have emerged since 1994. It has been almost 20 years since Cairo and we are still negotiating every year to maintain those commitments that have already been established through the Programme of Action, the Beijing Platform for Action, the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These agreements made essential advancements for women's health and rights and young people, in particular.

We cannot wait any longer for commitments that can make a real difference in the lives of adolescents and youth. We are fighting for a world where every adolescent and young person has access to comprehensive sexuality education that gives them the skills and information to know that their bodies belong to them and nobody else, that they can enjoy their sexuality, that they have the right to access comprehensive and integrated sexual and reproductive health services including a range of contraception. Governments must ensure that every young woman has the right to decide if and when she wants to have children.

We are here working with you, the policy-makers, the decision-makers, in order to create a world where young people's sexual and reproductive rights are fully respected and embraced. We are also here to make sure that our lives and health will no longer serve as compromises in political negotiations.

At this time in history it is not acceptable that many adolescent girls and young women across the world still lack access to comprehensive sexuality education, that empowers young women and girls, and integrated sexual and reproductive health services.

We must remove all barriers, including legal barriers, that keep adolescents and youth from their wellbeing and health. We don't understand why today young women and adolescents still need parental, partner, or husband consent for deciding over their own bodies and lives in many countries.

The rates of unsafe abortions among young women and adolescent girls and the number of maternal deaths due to unsafe abortion is unacceptable, and will only be reduced if governments commit to young women's rights and guarantee access to safe abortion, thus embracing and respecting our bodily integrity, autonomy, freedom, and dignity.

Why is it that in 2012 adolescent girls and young women continue to live under the constant threat of stigma, discrimination, violence and are disproportionately affected by harmful traditional practices?

The outcomes of the 45th session of the Commission on Population and Development will have a real effect on the lives of young people around the world. We strongly believe that adolescents and youth human rights should be at the center of any effort made for development. The ICPD Programme of Action was a strong step forward eighteen years ago. But, to date, many of the commitments made by States worldwide are still far from being implemented. Our participation in this process is essential and we are here to contribute and hold you, governments, accountable to your promises.

We urge all governments in support of youth sexual and reproductive health and rights issues to stand with us because we will not wait any longer.

Thank you.