



**Commission on Population and Development**  
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**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti**  
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(Check against delivery)

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your leadership. We are confident that under your wise chairmanship we will have a very fruitful and successful session this year.

I also wish to express our gratitude to the Population Division as well as to UNFPA and its daily efforts to support Member States in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development.

Mr. President,

The ICPD is first and foremost a development agenda. It encompasses a broad number of different, interrelated issues that are essential to population and development. The Programme of Action also incorporates a strong human rights perspective.

The Commission's special theme for this year, focusing on adolescents and youth, could not be more fitting. While the world still struggles with the negative impacts of the world economic and financial crisis, there is a clear need to invest in social and economic development, to improve social equality and the conditions for income generation and access to employment and decent job opportunities for all.

Young people are among those who struggle the most to attain and maintain political, social and economic rights. They are also the group with the greatest potential to address the ongoing and emerging challenges faced by our society. It is during adolescence that individuals begin their sexual and reproductive lives and must have their sexual and reproductive rights protected and promoted. Full attention must be given to the promotion of mutually respectful and equitable gender relations and particularly to meeting the educational and service needs of adolescents to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality.

Adolescents and youth make up the largest population group in Brazil, accounting for 30.1% of the population, or 49.8 million people. They also constitute an absolute majority among the groups in reproductive age. They are therefore the main group demanding public policies that are catered to their specific needs, particularly as regards sexual and reproductive health, protection of human rights and the need to address social and individual vulnerabilities.

In Brazil the National Secretariat for Youth designs, coordinates, integrates and articulates public policies targeted to young people, defined as those between 15 and 29 years of age. It also promotes cooperation with international organizations and other stakeholders. The National Council for Youth provides the guidelines for governmental action and studies the socioeconomic conditions of youth.

Mr. President,

In Brazil access to health is a constitutional right. Our Universal Health System (SUS) is one of the largest public health care systems with universal coverage in the world. It also

includes measures aimed at ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services for all.

Important policies have enabled increased attention to adolescents and youth in the SUS, in areas such as: family health strategy, access to contraception methods, including emergency contraception; prevention of sexual and domestic violence; training of health professionals; fostering youth participation; and services related to abortion in the cases provided for by law, which were recently expanded by an important decision of the Brazilian Supreme Court on pregnancy interruption in cases of anencephaly.

The Brazilian national policy for sexual and reproductive health and rights is part of the policy for integral attention to women's health and has a strong perspective of women's rights. Reproductive planning and sexual and reproductive services are understood as a matter of individual choice and as a genuine public health concern. The provision of reproductive planning methods includes measures aimed at increasing the participation of men and ensuring access to contraceptive methods and a wide variety of contraceptive supplies to all women in reproductive age, regardless of their marital status. Improving family planning services has also proved to be an important strategy to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality and the cases of unsafe abortion.

The Health in Schools Programme, currently under implementation in more than 50% of all Brazilian municipalities, includes comprehensive education on human sexuality with a view to providing the necessary information for adolescents to take well-informed decisions about their sexual lives and to enable them to avoid STDs and unplanned pregnancies. Fertility rates of adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age have dropped in the last decade. However, adolescent pregnancy continues to be a reason for concern, especially in the most socially vulnerable groups. Another serious challenge to be met is the maternal mortality rate of adolescents, which responds for more than 16% of all cases of maternal mortality in our country.

In the case of afro-descendants, a group that accounts for 51% of our population, the rates of maternal mortality and deaths caused by urban violence are higher than the national averages. This is a cause of concern and a challenge that we are addressing in our public health policies.

Although HIV prevalence has been stable in the last few years, we are concerned by the increase in the number of infections in specific groups such as young people, especially homosexuals and young women. This is the reason why these groups are being targeted by national prevention programmes.

Mr. President,

Social policies in Brazil are largely based on the active participation of civil society and other stakeholders. The outcomes of the National Thematic Conferences provide political guidance and legitimacy to our national programmes in various areas including youth-related issues, gender equality and empowerment of women and LGBT.

We strongly believe that our future depends on our young generation. With that goal in mind the Brazilian Government has created the National Program for Youth Integration, known as Projovem, a multisectoral programme that focuses on education, provision of livelihood skills and development of social and professional capacities.

Investing in our youth has been of utmost importance to lead us closer to achieving the MDGs. In the area of education, Brazil has managed to reduce illiteracy rates and racial and gender inequalities and to promote more access to education for young women and girls. As a result, women are now the majority group in every level of education in Brazil.

There is also an effort to incorporate gender and racial equality in education at all levels as well as to provide opportunities for adolescents in order to enable them to have better work conditions and to participate more actively in the economy. Brazil's conditional cash transfer program, "Bolsa Família", (which is a part of a larger social development programme called "Brazil without Poverty"), has managed to postpone young people's entry into the labor market and increase years of schooling.

Brazil has also been actively engaged in the most important fora related to adolescents and youth at the regional and multilateral levels. We have also been working in close collaboration with UNFPA and other partners in the promotion of South-South cooperation on all matters related to youth.

We must continue to mobilize international efforts to improve the condition of young people and their inclusion in decision-making processes regarding the most important challenges we are faced with both at the national and the international levels.

Thank you.