

Statement by

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United Nations



National Statement

**Commission on Population and Development
Forty-fifth Session**

24 April, 2012

New York
24 April, 2012

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Mr. Chairman, Excellences, Distinguished Delegates,

While I am addressing you – somewhere in the world a very poor young girl gives birth to a child. If she is lucky enough to go to school it will probably mean she will have to drop-out – leave her friends and future behind her. If she dreamt of having an education beyond primary school, her dreams will most likely never come through. She has a high risk of becoming sick, or even die, while given birth, and her child has a high risk of never reaching the age of five; or if it survives of being stunted. What should have been one of the happiest moments of her life – giving birth to a child – is also one of the most difficult, perhaps even desperate moments in her life.

Every year this is the reality of 16 million young girls. A staggering number – meaning that this reality kicks in every other second somewhere in the world. The lives of these young girls could look very different, if all young people had access to comprehensive information and to condoms or other modern contraceptives of their choice, giving them the possibility to wait and not have children until their bodies were more mature, until they had an education and were able to choose if, when and with whom to have children.

In Cairo in 1994, we all committed to ensure adolescents and youth in all our countries this fundamental right – the human right to freely decide over one's own body. This is what we set out to achieve with the Cairo programme of Action, but we still have a very long way in this endeavour.

Denmark aligns itself with the statement by the EU in underlining the urgent need for the full and systematic implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action as well as the key actions for further implementation, including the importance of furthering sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Placing human rights at the centre of population and development issues continue to represent a significant contribution of the ICPD in development policy.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2011, we welcomed citizen of the world no. 7 billion, and in 2040 the world population will pass the 9 billion mark, according to forecasts. Concerns about the sustainability of resources grow, placing population dynamics and family planning in the spotlight. Growth of the world population has slowed but fertility remains high in many countries. At the same time, the world is seeing the largest generation of young people in history. The need to address population and development simultaneously is therefore of crucial importance.

The upcoming Rio+20 conference in June should integrate and address the strong linkage between population dynamics and sustainable development with a special focus on the needs of young people, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights, in order to contribute

to viable solutions, ensuring a green and sustainable future. An agenda for sustainable development that does not include the population dimension is doomed to fail.

We all know the sad facts: Complications from pregnancy continue to be the leading cause of mortality among adolescent girls aged 15-19 in developing countries. Every year, around three million unsafe abortions are performed on women aged 15-19. Daily, 3000 young people are still newly infected with HIV.

Youth and adolescents are amongst the most vulnerable groups in poor societies. Particular attention must be given to their needs. They must be ensured universal access to health and education, also in situations of conflict and emergency. Unfortunately, we have yet to obtain universal access to these services as we set out to do with the Cairo and Millennium Development Goals (MDG5).

The ICPD itself affirms the right of adolescents to the highest attainable standards of health, including sexual and reproductive health. This includes providing adequate, youth-friendly and accessible services and information suitable for young people. The ICPD Programme of Action made it clear that it is the right of all young people to attain comprehensive sexuality education, to help them exercise their evolving capacity to make their own decisions; free of discrimination, coercion and violence.

Securing adolescents and young people's right to sexual and reproductive health - including access to modern and effective contraception - is a key component in ensuring their ability to assume responsibility and take charge of their own lives.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, let me draw your attention to the new strategy for Denmark's development cooperation that is about to go through Parliament. It states that our development partnerships are to be founded on a human rights-based approach to development. Without realising human rights people are kept in poverty - poverty alleviation and human rights indeed walk hand in hand.

The new strategy comprises four specific focus areas for Danish development cooperation. One of these is social development, which include spearheading the international efforts in furthering sexual and reproductive health and rights and combating HIV/AIDS.

It is unacceptable, that in the year 2012, we continue to witness far too many young people – notably young women and girls around the world striped of the human right to freely decide over their own body. And young people are too often denied the right to full and equal participation in the development of their societies. We have a responsibility to the over 1.8 billion young people today: To show political commitment and to set the backdrop for countries to put the necessary policies in place.

Likewise, we believe that special attention needs to be given to securing the rights of youth and adolescents in conflict-affected and fragile settings. Sexual and reproductive health and rights often suffer neglect in these situation, at the expense of the most vulnerable groups –young girls in particular, who also often fall victims to gender-based violence. Denmark has recently renewed its commitment to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights in the humanitarian field in the new Danish Humanitarian Strategy 2010-2015. In partnerships with UNFPA and UNICEF we strive to ensure the protection of both women and youth in conflict and long-lasting crises – often an important gap in the humanitarian efforts.

The priority given to sexual and reproductive health and rights is embedded in the rights concept. Denmark looks forwards the road ahead - paved with both challenges and promises - including the preparations for the twenty-year anniversary of the ICPD Programme of Action in 2014, including the important review of the current state of implementation. The ICPD+20 will also be an important stepping stone towards the formulation of new post-2015 objectives.

Each and every individual must be empowered to claim their human rights in order to take charge of their own life and eradicate poverty. We all have a responsibility to see this happen in order to obtain sustainable development and ensure young people and coming generations the future they rightfully deserve.

Thank you.