



Permanent Mission
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Candidate for the UN Human Rights Council

Statement

by

**H.E. Ambassador Miguel Berger
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to the United Nations**

at the

**General Debate on National Experience in Population
Matters: Adolescents and Youth**

(agenda item 4)

**during the 45th Session of the United Nations
Commission for Population and Development (CPD)**

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(check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Germany welcomes the theme of “Adolescents and Youth” chosen for this year’s session - the discussion on the challenges the largest population group faces is more than timely. Let me in this context thank the UN Secretary-General for his very comprehensive and insightful reports to the Commission. Let me also commend the distinguished keynote speakers, especially our youth delegates, for their exceptional and thought-provoking presentations.

Germany reaffirms its strong support for and commitment to the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action, as well as to the Key Actions for the Further Implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. With these two forward-looking documents, the international community committed itself to promoting and protecting reproductive rights more strongly - in particular the rights of adolescents to reproductive health education, information and care. All Member States were encouraged to ensure education about population and health issues, including sexual and reproductive health issues, in order to promote the well-being of adolescents, enhance gender equality and equity as well as responsible sexual behaviour. The protection of young people from early and unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual abuse and violence should be a priority to all of us.

The last decades have seen a great improvement in the reproductive health of men and women. However, girls and young women who have

been victims of sexual violence still very often are denied access to information, services and support which could enable them to protect their own sexual and reproductive health in an environment free from coercion, discrimination and violence.

We are deeply concerned that early childbearing and limited access to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health, especially in the area of emergency obstetric care, cause high levels of obstetric fistula and maternal mortality and morbidity. We are also concerned that such complications from pregnancy and childbirth and complications arising from unsafe abortions are among the leading causes of death among adolescent girls aged 15 to 19.

This increases the vulnerability of a large group of adolescent girls and young women. The consequences are well known: without access to comprehensive sexual education and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, young people – especially girls – are likely to face increasing problems, including early marriage, unwanted pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV. Furthermore, only few sexual education programmes address human rights issues and gender equality in relationships, something that is essential to empowering young people, preventing child abuse and gender-based violence, and to improving health, personal expression and self-respect.

Concepts of masculinity, positive male role models as well as responsible behaviour need to be promoted and integrated into curricula for comprehensive sexual education, enabling boys and young men to

support, promote and respect women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) recognized the importance of respecting young people's self-determination and responsibilities in decisions around their sexual and reproductive health. Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is one of the strategies that proved to be crucial for the realization of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of the young generation.

In the past few years new initiatives have taken shape which recognize the critical importance of a multi-sectoral response in this area, including both education and the provision of health services for better health outcomes for young people. Education in particular plays an important role in allowing girls to reach their full potential, preventing early marriages and high-risk child-bearing, and reducing associated mortality and morbidity.

Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is one of the priorities of German development cooperation in the area of health and population policy. It is seen as a necessary prerequisite for achieving international development goals. German development cooperation in health strives to promote SRHR through a human-rights-based and gender-sensitive approach, while also considering the complexity and causality of SRHR in terms of other sectors, such as education.

At the G8 summit in June 2010, Germany committed an additional 400 million euros in ODA up to 2015 for the G8 Muskoka initiative to promote maternal and child health.

To contribute to the implementation of the G8 Muskoka Initiative Germany has launched an initiative on 'Rights-based Family Planning and Maternal Health', which – among other objectives – seeks to improve knowledge and acceptance of modern family planning methods, and to increase their availability. The Initiative will double Germany's annual funding for reproductive health and family planning within its bilateral cooperation, from about €45 million in 2008 to at least €90 million a year.

German development cooperation contributions to health currently amount to nearly 700 million euros a year.

Germany recently launched a new education strategy, which focuses on a holistic approach to education and underlines the indispensable role of education for sustainable development in every other sector – for example, health, water, energy and others. Our strategy focuses on fair access to relevant, high-quality education for both genders. In 2010, German ODA disbursements for education amounted to almost 1.3 billion euros.

In addition, the German government has taken forward a number of initiatives to promote the integration of education and health for better sexual and reproductive health outcomes:

In 2008, the Ministers of Health and Education of Latin America and the Caribbean committed to roll out national human-rights-based HIV and sexuality education programmes under the Mexico City Declaration “Educating to Prevent”. Building on the experiences and successes of this process, Germany together with UNAIDS, and UNESCO launched an initiative aimed at achieving a high-level commitment in East and Southern Africa on HIV Prevention and Sexual Health for Young People. This Initiative is meant to catalyse political momentum to expand access to comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly health services. Together with our partners, we will be presenting this initiative in a side event during this session of the Commission.

Human Rights are the guiding principles for German development policy. We are committed to implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All our initiatives, building upon German development cooperation in the priority areas of health and education, contribute to the Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General.

Germany calls upon all partner governments as well as international institutions, the private sector and civil society to support this strategy and to give high priority to the promotion of education and sexual and reproductive health, for the benefit of young people.

Thank you for your kind attention.