



Commission on Population and Development
45th Session

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Agenda item 3: Actions in follow-up to the recommendations of the
International Conference on Population and Development

H.E. Mr. Morten Wetland
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Chair,

To be young can and should be beautiful.

But it is also very complicated.

More than anyone else, the young face fundamental questions:

Who am I, what is my identity, and what can I do to widen my options and choices in life?

And what other people have the power to take decisions about my life, and by what right do these people, belonging to past and present generations, have that power?

Chair,

It is for this Commission to widen people's personal freedom and to decide on frameworks that will enable people, not least young people, to make informed choices

- about their good health and well-being .
- about when to have children
- and the spacing of those children

18 years after the adoption of the Cairo Programme of Action, the world is witnessing the largest generation ever entering sexual and reproductive life. They aspire for education. Then they aspire for working opportunities, and for possibilities to have influence on society.

Since Cairo we have gained impressive new knowledge about what needs to be done to enable the young to take charge of their own destiny, which includes dealing with existential questions:

We have it in our power to promote and protect their human rights.

In our view, but I regret to say, not in the view of all of us this includes their sexual and reproductive rights.

(Check against delivery)

First,

We know that comprehensive sexuality education helps young people to cope with their identity, their sexuality and their fundamental decisions in life. In fact, girls and boys who receive comprehensive sexuality education are more likely to postpone sexual debut and protect themselves from abuse, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. In essence, this education gives them knowledge and skills that enables them to protect themselves.

Comprehensive sexuality education is not about encouraging children to experiment with their sexuality or indoctrinating them into non heterosexual lifestyles as some, regrettably, are falsely claiming.

Second,

A particular focus on girls and young women is required because of their vulnerabilities and specific needs. Early and forced marriages and early pregnancies can be a health risk and also deprive young girls of the opportunity to get educated, make a living, being a voice in society. We need to change this and allow them to reach their full potential – to make choices about their own lives, free of coercion, discrimination and any kind of violence.

Third,

We know that in countries where abortion is illegal, both the number of abortions and the number of women dying from abortions increase.

Thus it is false, as some claim, that those of us who promote and protect the human right of women to choose abortion as a way of dealing with unwanted pregnancies also promote abortion. On the contrary. I do not know of any country or government that favours abortions as such. The issue is now and in the future: Who should make the ultimate decision. The women? Or the custodians of old cultural or religious rules? Empirical evidence shows that those who oppose legal abortion actually contribute to promoting the use of abortion, of unsafe abortions and unnecessary deaths.

And this leads me to my last point with regards to human rights:

We know that all around the world - in all countries and in all cultures, subscribing to all religions – millions of people have sexual orientations that differ from the majority.

We know as well that millions of gays, lesbians and transgender persons, in all regions of the world, are being exposed to violence and harassment because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

This is a grave violation of their human rights, and this Commission must speak loudly to help bring this discrimination to an end!

Chair,

This has been a statement on the human rights of young people. Before I close, let me make a final point on the relationship between human rights and development:

We know that promotion and protection of human rights is not a product of – but a significant contributor to development. And that those countries that fail to recognize this pay the price themselves.

Thus it is false, as many claim, that respect for everyone's human rights must wait until a country reaches a certain level of development.

On the contrary; a rights-based approach to development is the only decent and effective way to go. We hope this will inspire all colleagues, to help us agree to an outcome document based on evidence and human rights!

Thank you.