

SWEDEN



STATEMENT

by

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Commission on Population and Development

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

Mr President,

My delegation welcomes this opportunity for a follow-up of the ICPD Programme of Action and Key Actions for Further Implementation. The ICPD Program of Action remains as relevant as ever – particularly in relation to young people.

Mr President, Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by the EU.

Imagine a world where the voices of young people count. Imagine a world where young people are free to seek their identity and fulfill their potential, without fear of repression, exclusion or discrimination.

Young people – with their knowledge, experiences and engagement – contribute immensely to a peaceful, democratic and sustainable development.

But not all young people have the same possibilities. Therefore, we need to ensure the universal rights of all girls, boys, young women and men to participation, to quality education and to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The right to meaningful participation is important in its own right, and is also a prerequisite for the full enjoyment by young people of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Everyone, regardless of disability, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, sex or gender identity or any other status, should have the same rights and possibilities to be meaningfully involved in decision-making processes – planning and implementation – that affect their lives and futures.

Education for all children and young people, is one of the best ways to achieve sustainable development and eradicate poverty. Without quality education it is not possible to build human capital and it is difficult to break intergenerational transmission of poverty or exploitation. We need to eliminate barriers to education and learning, such as gender discrimination, violence and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health rights and services. Evidence also shows that unwanted teenager pregnancies are a major challenge for the continuation of education for young girls.

Evidence and human rights based comprehensive sexuality education is therefore key to ensuring that young people are empowered to make informed decisions on their sexual and reproductive health. This includes practicing safer sex, preventing unintended and unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, as well as equipping young people with a positive view on sexuality and gender equal relations.

Nevertheless, there is still a large unmet need of contraceptives. Many of those who are denied the rights of access to contraceptive commodities - are young, unmarried girls. The direct effect of this is a unacceptably high preventable maternal mortality and morbidity rate among young women.

We must take all necessary measures to change the current situation where complications from pregnancy and childbirth are among the leading causes of death among adolescent girls aged 15 to

19, including unsafe abortions. We need to increase access to reproductive health services such as obstetric care, emergency contraception, safe abortions and post-abortion care.

Confidential and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, including access to modern contraceptives are crucial to ensure that young people, particularly young women can enjoy their human rights as well as continue and finalize their education.

However, to effectively promote gender equality we cannot focus only on women and girls. It is also necessary to engage men and boys as partners in order to address negative expressions and forms of masculinity and attitudes and behaviors towards women and girls. Boys and young men need new, equal role models.

Violence against young people, not least young women, and harmful traditional practices remains a serious problem. Non-consensual sex or various types of sexual coercion is still common all over the world. This is unacceptable. We need to eliminate child- and early marriage, as these practices are violating young peoples human rights and freedom to decide over their own lives.

Human rights and gender equality are also integral parts of the effective implementation of the ICPD agenda and key for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Swedish government has placed the achievements of MDGs, the ICPD agenda and the rights of children and young people, including sexual and reproductive health and rights as top priorities for our development cooperation and we are therefore among the absolute top donors to UN organizations such as UNFPA, UN Women, UNDP and UNICEF. We will continue to stress these aspects in the preparations for the post MDG 2015 development agenda.

Mr. President,

We need to fulfill our commitments to the ICPD Program of Action. Countries must ensure that laws, programs and attitudes of health care providers don't restrict adolescents rights and access to sexual and reproductive health service and information that they need, as agreed 18 years ago.

Young people's human rights needs to be respected and implemented. Young people must have access to educational services and program, including comprehensive human rights based sexuality education contraceptive information and commodities that are accessible and affordable for young people. We therefore need to review and remove laws and other barriers that restrict young people's access to sexual and reproductive services.

We hope that this session will take us a step closer towards reaching the MDGs, implementing the ICPD agenda and creating the opportunities for young people to grow, to take responsibility and to make informed decisions.