



AUSTRALIA



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Fifty-third Session of the Commission on Population and Development

Australian General Statement

The Australian Government thanks the Chair of the fifty-third session of the Commission on Population and Development for their efforts to secure a consensus statement during this challenging global pandemic.

The world is facing a crisis of immense magnitude. Global cooperation is more important than ever as we work to stop the spread of the virus and its impact. COVID-19 is detrimental to health systems, economies and lives as it spreads across regions and populations.

Australia remains firmly committed to implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and accelerating progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This commitment was restated during the Nairobi Summit to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the ICPD.

The special theme of the fifty-third session, 'Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development' is of critical importance to Australia at all times but even more so as the world faces a pandemic and responds to unprecedented pressures on supply chains. The Australian Government is working to maintain an essential services and humanitarian corridor to the Pacific and Timor-Leste to allow for the movement of essential expertise, supplies and food to the region.

In addition to the special theme, Australia is committed to the underlying tenet of the ICPD - protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Access to sexual and reproductive health, particularly family planning, is critical for women's empowerment, improving gender equality, and reducing maternal and child mortality. These services save the lives of women and girls, and help them stay healthy, remain in education and participate in society and the economy.

Women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights are under serious pressure in this global crisis. Restrictive measures to limit the spread of the virus increase the risk of sexual and gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, and harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.

Australia recognises the need for sexual and reproductive health services for populations in emergencies is particularly acute and commits to continue support through our foreign policy and aid program during this current global crisis.

We ask the Commission to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights remain firmly at the centre of its work throughout and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.