

Madam Chair,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of 30 countries: Australia, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Spain, Slovenia, Switzerland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and on behalf of my own country France.

First of all, we would like to express our gratitude to you, Madam Chair, for your efficient conduct of this session and we would like to thank the facilitators for their tireless work. We also would like to thank the other Bureau members and the secretariat for their support and guidance. We would like to acknowledge the presence of civil society groups and youth, for bringing important voices to these discussions.

Our countries have been, and continue to be, strong and vocal advocates for the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcome documents of the review conferences.

We back up this commitment through our policies in our own countries and through our support to sustainable development efforts abroad. We firmly believe that the full realization of all human rights including sexual and reproductive health and rights, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are essential for addressing changing population age structures, eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development for all.

We deeply regret that for the second time in the matter of a few years, this Commission was unable to reach a consensus on this very important topic, despite our willingness to accept the final proposed by the Chair this morning.

As reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda, the achievement of full human potential is not possible if we do not meaningfully address discrimination, violence and continued human rights violations against women and girls. We believe that all people have the right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, free of coercion, discrimination and violence – as a matter of social justice.

We must do everything in our power to protect young people and adolescents' rights, help them realize their full potential and develop into healthy, educated adults. For this reason, we believe that young people and adolescents should have access to comprehensive sexuality education in order to understand and make informed decisions on matters relating to their bodies and sexualities, to protect themselves from sexually transmissible infections and unplanned pregnancies and to contribute to development.

These aims are not only important for their prosperity and development as individuals, but also for the development of our countries as a whole and to capitalize on the demographic dividend.

Madam Chair, our group notes with concern the lack of reference to sexual rights, which are at the heart of sustainable development. When individuals can control their choices and be safe and healthy in their sexual and reproductive lives, they are better able to participate in education and the labor market, to care for their families, and have more capacity to contribute to their communities and social life. It is therefore an imperative that women and girls, particularly adolescents, have full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Madam Chair, we thank you again for your leadership during this session. We are hopeful that we will be able to improve our methods of work and ability to reach consensus on these critical issues.

You can count on our continued engagement in the Commission's work.

Thank you.