

The National Dutch statement at the 51st Commission on Population and Development.

Honourable chair, esteemed delegates,

As a young person, and maybe even the youngest in the room, I have spoken to many young people around the world. The theme of this year's CPD, 'Sustainable cities, mobility and international migration' has a huge impact on the lives of young people.

My name is Melodi Tamarzians and I am the Dutch Youth Ambassador on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. I am happy to deliver this statement on behalf of the Government of the Netherlands and to bring youth voices and perspectives to this room. I would call on other governments to meaningfully engage young people within their delegations to ensure that the CPD is a more inclusive space.

This week, we are here to talk about people who are on the move – either looking for opportunities in cities, or seeking safety after being forced to flee their homes and countries. I am here to speak to you about the importance and relevance of acknowledging Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, because these rights affects us all, every day and everywhere. It's about love, sex and life. It's about a young girl being forced into marriage, it's about a trans boy facing discrimination and violence or, a young couple being denied sexuality information and access to contraceptives. These situations are not rare and are intensified in times of mobility.

I think the smallest anecdotes tell the biggest stories, so let me introduce you to some inspiring young people I met this past year. A brave young girl I spoke to in a small village in rural Mozambique who told me her horrid story. How she was raped, became pregnant against her will, and almost died because of an unsafe abortion. Although abortion is not illegal in Mozambique, access to youth friendly reproductive services and comprehensive sexuality education is limited. Stigma and discrimination force many to seek unsafe abortions.

In Armenia I was pulled aside by a 14-year old girl who was trapped in a situation of domestic violence with a husband she didn't want to marry. I spoke with a young Syrian refugee in the Netherlands, who wanted to know more about sexual health, but didn't know how to access that information. Or the girl in Ethiopia who told me about menstrual shame and the fact that she had to leave school because she started her period.

All these brave young people taught me an important lesson! If a young girl is unable to go to school, due to lack of sanitary pads, child marriage or teenage pregnancy, she will probably not become socially or economically independent. If there is no access to safe abortion, free contraceptives for girls and boys, and no access to accurate information on sexuality in schools, young people are left with misconceptions and denied **essential services**, which eventually, puts their health at risk. While I am addressing these issues from a human rights perspective, it is also in the State's benefit to ensure that their population is healthy and informed. This underlines the need for every country to take more responsibility for the health and well-being of its own population by investing more in Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights and be less dependent on foreign aid.

And young people HAVE to be involved, because we are the ones actually living the reality behind the policies. I strongly believe in the infinite power of young people to make a change for themselves and their communities. We have the fundamental right to explore and express our own identity: without

shame, discrimination, or jeopardizing our health or life. Because sexual and reproductive health and rights cannot be a privilege. It should not depend on your age, where you're from, where you live, or how your government feels about it. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are inalienable human rights. We need to start addressing these issues in today's world of increasing interconnectedness and urbanization. I call to governments to integrate sexual and reproductive health and rights within your interventions AND policies, and ultimately to ensure we leave no one behind.

Thank you!