

Oral Statement to be submitted to the 54th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women at the 15th Year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action, by the International Sexual and Reproductive Rights Coalition, made up of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Center for Reproductive Rights, Foundation for the Study and Research on Women, the World Wide Young Women's Christian Association, International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region, Pathfinder International, Ipas, Population Action International, Center for Health and Gender Equity, International Women's Health Coalition, World Population Foundation

Fifteen years ago at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the international community agreed that upholding women's rights, including in matters relating to their sexuality and reproduction, were fundamental to the health and wellbeing of society. The Platform for Action provides the foundation needed to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). When governments invest in women and girls and make their health and wellbeing central to their policies and programs, they create more just and prosperous societies. The Platform for Action puts the respect and fulfillment of women's human rights, including to their sexual and reproductive rights and health, at the center of international policy.

Women's Health is one of the pillars of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. At the 2009 Commission on Population and Development, member states reaffirmed their commitments to achieving universal access to reproductive health (MDG target 5b), recognized the disproportionate vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS, and reiterated their commitment to protecting girls and women from HIV through sexual and reproductive health services and education that promotes gender equality. These commitments must be acted upon immediately and reinforced through the Beijing review process.

Let us all commit to three core actions in the next five years in order to contribute towards the fulfillment of the MDGs and advance the Beijing Platform:

1. Implement comprehensive sexual and reproductive health programs and ensure all women and young people's access to quality, affordable, and accessible services.
2. Strengthen health systems to ensure non-discriminatory, equitable access to these services, as well as health information and comprehensive sexuality education, particularly for the largest-ever generation of young people.
3. Invest in legislative reforms, policies and programs, that give women and girls access to economic resources, skills training, social support, and safe spaces that protect and guarantee their human right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive choice, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence.^[1]

There is no more important investment to be made: Only healthy women whose human rights are protected can be fully productive workers and effective participants in their country's political processes. Only when women are healthy and empowered can they raise and educate healthy children if and when they decide to do so. These are the building blocks of stable societies and growing economies, and imperative in their own right. We urge you to take action now.

^[1] United Nations. Platform for Action, paragraph 96. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, September 4-15, 1995, Beijing, China. Available at: <http://www.un.org/esa/gopher-data/conf/fwcw/off/a--20.en>