

HRC25: Agenda item #8: statement - Follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action



Theme: 20-year anniversary of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

Thank you Mr. President.

I make this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative.¹

According to the Vienna Declaration, human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated². It reaffirms the right to development as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of human rights; and recognizes human persons as the central subjects of development³.

The Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD PoA) similarly places individuals at the center of development and recognizes every person's right to make free and informed decisions regarding one's own sexuality and sexual and reproductive health. At its core, the ICPD PoA places individuals' autonomous decision-making on matters related to their sexuality at the center of development.

This year, we celebrate 20 years of the ICPD PoA. While much progress has been made towards greater respect, protection and fulfilment of individuals' sexual and reproductive rights, challenges persist. Structural inequalities related to sexuality and reproduction, which contribute to the marginalization of diverse groups of people, are rooted in inequitable gender hierarchies and patriarchal notions of masculinity, femininity and the need to control women's and girls bodies and sexualities. Similarly, laws and policies continue to impose barriers to access sexual and reproductive health services and information, including parental, guardian and spousal consent laws and laws criminalizing girls' and women's access to safe abortion services.

Addressing these challenges requires that States take all necessary steps to eliminate inequality, stigma, discrimination and violence perpetuated against individuals on the basis of sexuality, sexual orientation, health status, gender, ability, gender identity and gender expression, and to realise the full range of human rights through repealing or revising discriminatory laws.

We urge all Member States to fully implement the ICPD PoA and to ensure that commitments made in the ICPD PoA are safeguarded and advanced in a human rights-based Post-2015 development framework.

Thank you.

¹ The Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI) is a coalition of organizations that advocates for the advancement of human rights in relation to gender and sexuality within international law and policy. The SRI partners are: Action Canada for Population and Development, Akahatá - Equipo de Trabajo en Sexualidades y Generos, Coalition of African Lesbians, Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (India), Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, and Federation for Women and Family Planning (Poland). For more information, visit: www.sexualrightsinitiative.com

² Vienna Declaration, para 5

³ Ibid, para 10