



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on Population and Development

Forty-eighth session

13-17 April 2015

**General debate on national experience in population matters:  
realizing the future we want — integrating population issues  
into sustainable development, including in the post-2015  
development agenda**

### **Statement submitted by Stichting Rutgers WPF, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### **A human rights-based approach is crucial for an inclusive and transformative post-2015 development agenda**

Stichting Rutgers WPF and the undersigned organizations\* in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, non-governmental organizations promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights worldwide, welcome the theme of the forty-eighth session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development “Realizing the future we want: integrating population issues into sustainable development, including the post-2015 development agenda”.

Since the ICPD beyond 2014 Global Review, we even more realize that much work is still needed to secure universal sexual and reproductive health and rights. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are indivisible, inalienable human rights. In the existing development frameworks however, sexual and reproductive health and rights are far from being fully addressed. This omission seriously undermines the possibility to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.

The year 2015 marks the year that discussions about the post-2015 development agenda will be finalized. It is of utmost importance that human rights are at the core of the universal development agenda, including its principles of accountability, empowerment, participation and non-discrimination. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are central to human development. The sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda is centrally inter-linked to all key development agendas: gender equality, human rights, poverty, migration, health, climate change, population dynamics, food security and access to resources. Integrating population issues in sustainable development from a rights-based perspective offers the ultimate opportunity to address sexual and reproductive health and rights of all groups and to address the growing inequalities we see today: young people make up nearly 1.8 billion of today’s world population of 7.3 billion,<sup>1</sup> and almost 9 out of 10 are living in less developed countries. About 225 million women of reproductive age have an unmet need for modern contraception<sup>2</sup> of which there is an estimated high proportion of unmarried young people. The exact unmet need among unmarried young people is unknown, but likely to be high as services often do not cater for this particular group. Furthermore, adolescent girls aged 15-19 are disproportionately affected by unsafe abortion. Among the estimated 3.2 million abortions in adolescents, almost half are in the Africa region.<sup>3</sup> Young people and adolescents are most vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and about one in seven new HIV infections occur during adolescence. One third of girls living in less developed countries are married before the age of 18. About 19 per cent become pregnant before age 18 and about three per cent before the age of 15 — leading to school drop-outs<sup>4</sup> and high maternal mortality rates. Up to half of sexual assaults are committed against girls below the age of 16.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Population Fund, 2014. The Power of 1.8 Billion: Adolescents, youth and the transformation of the future. State of World Population. New York: UNFPA.

<sup>2</sup> Singh, S., Darroch, J.E., and Ashford, L.S. 2014. Adding It Up: Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014. New York: Guttmacher Institutes and UNFPA.

<sup>3</sup> Börjesson, E., Pedersen, K., and Villa Torres, L., 2014. Youth act for safe abortion: A training guide for future health professionals. Chapel Hill, NC: Ipas.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Populations Fund, 2013. Motherhood in Childhood: Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancy. State of World Population. New York: UNFPA.

These figures show only some of the inequalities we see today and evidence the urgency for full recognition of sexual and reproductive health and rights. All people have the right to the highest attainable standard of sexual and reproductive health, free of any form of coercion, stigma and discrimination. Sexual and reproductive rights need to be respected at all times, with particular attention to those groups who often see their rights denied, including young people and adolescents, women, migrants, drug users, indigenous and rural populations, sex workers, people in conflict and emergency situations, refugees and asylum seekers, persons with disabilities, people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are the rights of all people to make decisions regarding their own sexuality, without infringing the rights of other people; to decide if, when and how many children to have; to have all the necessary information, means and services available to reach at the best possible sexual and reproductive health; and to be free from coercion, stigma and discrimination. Central is an individual's well-being and their right to decide, while not limiting sexual and reproductive health and rights to access to family planning or reproductive health services, which at the same time impacts on a more healthy family, community and a more prosperous society. It is of great importance that these principles of the ICPD Programme of Action, approaching population dynamics from a rights-based approach, are reiterated in the post-2015 development agenda.

The following commitments are required in order to achieve an inclusive and transformative post-2015 development agenda:

Governments must commit to sustainable development goals, targets and indicators that respect, protect and fulfil human rights for all and that are based on the principles of universal human rights. Only through a human rights-based approach, the post-2015 development agenda may be inclusive and transformative and lead to addressing the rooted inequalities between countries, within countries and between individuals.

Governments must commit to the integration of population issues, as reflected in the ICPD Programme of Action and its key actions for the further implementation into the post-2015 development agenda, including the full inclusion of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In terms of implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, the following actions are required:

Governments must increase and improve the collection and generation of data on sexual and reproductive health and rights of all (population) groups, at all stages in life including before, during and after the reproductive age, and in all situations including migrants and refugees, rural communities and people living in informal settlements. Recognizing the diversity of needs and situations regarding the sexual and reproductive health of people, governments and United Nations agencies need to collect disaggregated data by age, gender, rural/urban residence, income quintile, educational background and must prioritize birth and death registration.

Governments must commit to an effective accountability mechanism for the post-2015 development agenda that recognizes and integrates existing and universally agreed human rights norms and standards. If these commitments are not

made, the new development agenda is based on empty promises depending on voluntary action. Basing the accountability mechanism on human rights enables citizens to monitor their own governments and hold them accountable. Meaningful participation of civil society must therefore be secured at the heart of the accountability process.

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- Women and Modern World
  - Social Charitable Centre
  - Advocates for Youth
  - Awaz Centre for Development Services
  - Center for Health and Gender Equity, Inc.
  - Equidad de Genero: Ciudadania, Trabajo y Familia, A.C.
  - Family Care International
  - Forum for Women and Development — FOKUS
  - Fundacion para Estudio Investigacion de la Mujer
  - IPAS
  - International HIV/AIDS Alliance
  - Italian Association for Women in Development
  - Population Action International
  - Youth Net and Counselling
  - stichting dance4life
  - World Young Women's Christian Association
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