

Civil society statement for the UNECE Regional Conference on ICPD+25

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Thank you, Co-Chair

Yesterday, with support from UNFPA, civil society organizations from the ECE region participated in the consultation, which was the culmination of a process during the past two months to develop a CSO vision on progress made during the past five years since ICPD Beyond 2014 in the region; to translate commitments into action; and to consider priorities for the follow-up.

We welcome the opportunity to present our key findings, which I will now do on behalf of all the participants. Other organizations will reflect the outcomes of our deliberations in their statements on relevant agenda items:

As we celebrate ICPD+25, as civil society organizations from the ECE region, we would like to reaffirm and build on the progress that our region has made in implementing the ICPD Agenda, including realizing access to sexual and reproductive health and rights since the adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) in 1994.

The ECE is a very diverse region, with different needs, challenges and opportunities. Much remains to be done to combat inequalities among and within countries of this region and ultimately achieve the goals of ICPD and ICPD beyond 2014. At the same time, Member States should recognise the changing needs of individuals across their life course and develop programmes and policies that reflect the needs of all, from young people to ageing populations and individuals dealing with sub-fertility.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

We are very concerned about the retrogressive policies, legislation and practices related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially laws and policies that restrict access to abortion, emergency contraception, comprehensive sexuality education, as well as the failure to criminalize sexual and gender-based violence and restrict access to assisted reproductive technologies. Such discriminatory laws and policies represent human rights violations, particularly for women and girls, and the ability of other marginalized groups to make free and informed decisions related to their bodies.

We call on Member States to remove all legal and policy obstacles that undermine human rights in relation to sexuality, reproduction and gender, and that hamper women's access to reproductive health services, including legal abortion, and to advance national regulatory frameworks in alignment with international human rights law, conventions and resolutions.

Shrinking space for civil society organizations

We are very alarmed at the 'shrinking space' of civil society in the region. In some countries we have witnessed that human rights defenders in general, and women's human rights defenders in particular, are under attack. Moreover, oppression against free academia, especially against gender studies departments, is most alarming.

We call on Member States, UN entities and the private sector to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment where civil society organizations and free academic thinking can participate meaningfully and feed into societal development processes. Member States must unite to counteract conservative stances by strengthening and amplifying progressive voices, particularly in an altered political environment. We call on them to contribute to increased transparency through open dialogue with civil society and policy groups and by creating more opportunities to discuss pertinent development issues, national responses and challenges surrounding the attainment of universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, and health services in general in the region.

Regional progress report and monitoring framework

We welcome the regional progress report and monitoring framework for the ICPD Programme of Action Beyond 2014. We urge Governments to move from words to concrete action. Investing in appropriate and meaningful data collection and disaggregation is crucial.

Better and stronger coordination with National Statistical Offices must be established and appropriate funds made available to ensure that the necessary and reliable data is gathered, analysed and accessible. Implementation of the international promises made by Governments is a must. Without solid implementation, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms in place, it will not be possible to bring about policy change and take the necessary measures to achieve the international commitments made throughout the last 25 years, in particular the ICPD Agenda, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In addition, this regional monitoring framework must be aligned with other frameworks, including international human rights accountability mechanisms; the sustainable development goals; the WHO Europe Action Plans for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Healthy Ageing; and the Istanbul Convention. To further the realization of sexual and reproductive rights, as independent civil society organizations, we will ensure that interlinkages are made. We will monitor the implementation of these commitments and leverage all the spaces available, such as the Universal Periodic Review, Treaty Body Mechanisms, and voluntary national reviews at the national level, as well in the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development and the High-level Political Forum. We call on Governments to do likewise.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda represents a paradigm change, recognizing that Governments alone are not able to make the necessary progress to ensure that 'no one is left behind'. Civil society organizations and other stakeholders have an important role for all people including marginalized groups such as rural populations, persons with disabilities, adolescent girls and young women, persons in informal settlements, out-of-school youth, sex workers, migrants, displaced populations, indigenous people, people living with HIV, older people and people of different sexual orientation and gender identities, free from stigma, coercion, discrimination and violence. We must work jointly to reach them and to use our financial and human resources more effectively.

We call on Member States to address targets 3.7 and 5.6 in their national action plans for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in all countries, including in those countries with relatively good scores on the respective indicators and to ensure that these targets are achieved for all and nobody is left behind.

Financing, including overseas development assistance

Current levels of financing, including levels and models of official development assistance, as well as domestic resource mobilization, are still well below those needed to achieve the sustainable development goals, and commodity funding has reached a crisis point.

We call on Member States to show their political will by reaffirming their commitment to mobilise more and predictable funding, as agreed in the ICPD Programme of Action; to accelerate its implementation of the PoA which will in turn contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Member States should also operationalize the right to health by adopting equitable and rights-based planning and resource allocation and facilitating community participation in health decision-making and programming.

Comprehensive sexuality education and youth statement

We strongly support the youth statement, and ask Member States to ensure the inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education in schools to increase the knowledge and skills of young people related to their sexuality as well as improve gender equality aspects.

Thank you