

**UNECE, Regional Conference on ICPD
High Level Segment
AUSTRIA**

This year marks 75 years of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 30 years of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action and almost 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development.

I am mentioning those together because they all were milestones for the recognition of women's rights and the importance of human-centered and rights-based sustainable development. Everyone must be free to make choices about their lives, their bodies and their sexuality. These universal rights lie at the heart human dignity and at the heart of reaching the 2030 Agenda.

For women this means to freely decide about their own reproductive life, about their method of contraception, about family planning and the number of their children as well as to have access to comprehensive sex education programs. In 2022, the WHO also identified improving access to comprehensive abortion care as essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals on health and well-being (SDG3) and gender equality (SDG5).

We have all the evidence today: Putting women's sexual and reproductive rights at the center of social policies and ensuring their access to modern methods of family planning not only saves women's lives but boosts development.

Some of the evidence can found in the report on the ICPD Program of Action: maternal mortality in our region decreased, women's participation in the labor market and in decision-making generally increased over the last 20 years.

Nonetheless, the global consensus reached in Cairo in 1994 is under enormous pressure today, also here in international Geneva. The 30th anniversary of the ICPD would be a missed opportunity if we don't use it to get together to promote and protect the autonomy, agency and choice of women and girls and their right to make decisions about their own bodies without coercion. Cairo has taught us that advocacy to change attitudes and social norms, persistent reasoned

arguments, facts and real-life experiences can achieve concrete change in global decision-making, and that we can use those decisions to transform women's lives around the world.

Thank you Chair.