

IPPF EN statement for the UNECE Regional Conference on ICPD+25 on thematic session: Inequalities, Social Inclusion and Rights

Dear Delegates,

30 years ago, ICPD adopted a groundbreaking, human-centered, rights-based approach to population and development. This approach remains more relevant than ever. The International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network welcomes ICPD+30 as a key moment to celebrate progress and address challenges.

Social inequalities are rising in the region, and were exacerbated by recent crises. Women and girls, and those facing intersecting discrimination, are amongst the most affected. Their sexual and reproductive health and rights are insufficiently protected, as governments fail to recognise them as essential health services and include them in Universal Health Coverage.

Governments must pay particular attention to the specific needs of marginalised communities, and guarantee their sexual and reproductive health and rights; particularly for young people, ethnic minorities including Roma, migrants and refugees, socio-economically disadvantaged people, persons living with disabilities, and HIV, sex workers, and LGBTQI+ people.

Sexual and reproductive justice is essential to advancing gender equality. Yet, many women in the region are still deprived from their bodily and reproductive autonomy. Progress is uneven across the region, and some countries are even regressing. Violations of sexual and reproductive rights, including gynaecological and obstetric violence, forced pregnancy, and the criminalisation and denial of abortion, are structural forms of gender-based violence, that may amount to torture and even femicide, in cases where women have lost their lives. We call on governments to remove all barriers to the full range of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to notably implement the latest WHO Guideline on abortion care.

Sexual and gender-based violence remains shockingly prevalent in the region. To prevent it, governments must provide mandatory comprehensive sexuality education in line with UNESCO Technical Guidance, which challenges harmful gender norms, toxic masculinity, and educates on consent. To combat sexual violence, all Member States must also adopt consent-based laws, in line with the Istanbul Convention.

Finally, in the face of growing anti-gender and anti-choice pushback, we call on UN agencies and governments to unite to counter these illiberal stances, and renew their political and financial commitment to the whole ICPD Agenda.

In too many countries, civil society actors and Women Human Rights Defenders who fight for sexual and reproductive health and rights face repression for their work, including from their own governments. Member States must provide them protection, political and financial support; as called for by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights this 28 September.

Thank you