



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on Population and Development

### Fiftieth session

3-7 April 2017

Item 3 of the provisional agenda<sup>1</sup>

**General Debate 3 (a): Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels**

**3(b) Special theme of the fiftieth session<sup>2</sup> of the Commission based on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation**

### **Statement submitted by Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council<sup>3</sup>**

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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<sup>1</sup> E/CN.9/2017/1.

<sup>2</sup> Changing population age structures and sustainable development.

<sup>3</sup> The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### **Include, Invest and Implement: Prioritizing Youth Sexual and Reproductive Rights to Achieve Sustainable Development**

The Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights is an international youth-led organization committed to promoting adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive rights at the national, regional and international levels. This statement, submitted on the occasion of the fiftieth session of the Commission on Population and Development serves to further this mission and urges governments to prioritize youth rights, inclusion, and participation in the Sustainable Development Goals.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) State of World Population 2014 report, young people constitute the largest ever youth population with 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 worldwide. At a time in which politics polarize, economic differences are growing and climate change is being ignored, we demand that governments prioritize inclusive strategies to invest in young people. Now more than ever, young people are poised to be the driving force for sustainable development -but we can't do it alone.

#### **We call on governments to:**

**Invest in quality education, including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).** Young people have the right to accurate information around sexuality. We need educators, including peer educators, to open up conversations on relationships, safe sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, HIV and AIDS, consent, pleasure and sexual and reproductive health and rights. CSE should be offered both inside and outside of schools, in order to reach all young people. Young people are the ones most impacted by the lack of protection of human rights to exercise their sexuality, reproduction and bodily autonomy. As informed and skilled young people, we must be granted the tools and autonomy to be able to make our own decisions concerning sex, whether or not to have children, thus determining the course of our lives.

**Practice meaningful youth participation.** We deserve a place at the table: Not only are we the leaders who will enable innovation and drive sustainable development, young people will be the population most affected should the Sustainable Development Goals not be achieved. Policies that will affect us must be developed with us, which includes the participation of young people in political spaces, decision-making platforms and accountability mechanisms, at all levels, including in formulating, developing, implementing and evaluating laws, policies, plans and budgets. This should also apply to the participation of young people in the planning, implementation, follow-up, and review processes of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Recognize young people in all our diversity.** Young people are not a homogeneous population but comprise of many identities that carry diverse and unique perspectives and needs. "Young people" refers to diverse groups that include (but are not limited to) Young People Living with HIV, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex youth (LGBTQI), indigenous, afro-descendants, persons with disabilities, marginalized ethnicities, religious minorities, migrants

that are documented and undocumented, drug users, disadvantaged economic and social groups, young parents, young women, men who have sex with men, refugees, young people in conflict and emergency situations, pregnant girls, dropouts, displaced people, language minorities, asylum seekers, young people living on the streets, those working in the informal economy, adolescent girls, sex workers, and young people deprived of freedom, among others, as acknowledged in the 2012 Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration.

**Invest in youth-friendly health services including sexual and reproductive health services.** According to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, and reinforced in Goal Three of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the right to sexual and reproductive health has been identified. We, as young people, need accessible, affordable and quality health care, free from stigma and discrimination. Young people must be able to access health services regardless of age, parental consent, HIV-status, marital status, sexual activity, occupation or identity.

Repeal laws that criminalize and restrict access to young people's sexual and reproductive rights. This includes repealing laws that restrict expression of sexual orientation and gender identity, access to health services including abortion and contraceptives, limit access to CSE, and laws that criminalize sex work.

**Adopt a human rights-based approach in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** All policies and programmes towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals must be rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Conference of Population and Development Programme of Action, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, their review documents, and other international human rights instruments. World leaders have committed to protecting our human rights and we as civil society members are tasked with holding governments accountable.

**The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is one that strives to leave no one behind.** If we are committed to taking a meaningful step towards sustainable development, a human-rights based approach that prioritizes, meaningfully engages, and invests in young people in all our diversity, must be adopted. Young people stand ready to actively contribute and collaborate to enable the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.