

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **47th session of the Commission on Population and Development: Governments Commit to Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights in Development Policies**

The 47<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development reaffirmed the commitments made in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD PoA), and agreed to accelerate efforts in addressing the gaps and challenges in its implementation.

The Commission also stressed the importance of integrating population and development issues into the post-2015 development agenda.

The outcome document from the session, adopted by consensus by UN Member States, reiterates some key achievements in the ICPD PoA, including reaffirming that sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights are central to social justice and sustainable development, and recognizing the need to address persistent inequalities and discrimination on any grounds in order to enhance development.

Amnesty International welcomes the fact that the Commission urges Member States to ensure respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling of all human rights, including gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Equally important is that the Commission acknowledges the negative impact of pervasive gender-based violence on the ability of women and girls to benefit from development.

Amnesty International also commends the Commission for recognizing some fundamental gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Programme of Action. Those include the need for equitable and universal access to quality, integrated and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, and the need to address discriminatory laws and practices.

In addition, the Commission acknowledged the rights and needs of marginalized populations, including migrants, older persons, persons with disabilities, Afro-

descendant populations, Indigenous peoples, and young people (including their right to evidence-based comprehensive education on human sexuality).

However, we are disappointed that despite the reference to addressing discrimination on any grounds, the Commission shied away from addressing the persistent and systemic discrimination and violence faced by individuals and groups on grounds of their perceived or actual sexual orientation and gender identity, and in recognizing the sexual rights of all individuals.

Additionally, the outcome document lacks a commitment to specifically addressing the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Notably, though, throughout the CPD 47, many governments from different regions expressed unprecedented support for the need to recognize sexual rights, and end all forms of discrimination and violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Similar calls were also made in many of the regional reviews that preceded this session of the Commission.

However, the manner in which the negotiations were conducted, as well as the efforts of the Holy See and some Member States, allowed for these important rights, which have been recognized by the UN human rights bodies as state obligations since the adoption of the ICPD PoA, to be excluded from the CPD47 outcome document.

Amnesty International welcomes the Commission's call on governments to prioritise key services including family planning services, pre- and post-natal care, treatment of sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and quality services for the management of complications arising from abortion.

The conditions attached to the provision of some of these services are of concern, however, such as ensuring accessible and safe abortion services only when abortion is not against the law. Also of concern is the support for restrictions placed by cultural and religious values while providing health services to adolescents. Such conditions are proven barriers to access to sexual and reproductive health services, leading to serious human rights violations. They are inconsistent with the international human rights obligations of states.

Amnesty International reminds Member States that they have an obligation to ensure that individuals can enjoy their sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to the highest attainable standard of health and the right to non-discrimination. References to culture, religion, and tradition cannot be used to justify discrimination and other human rights violations.

Amnesty International welcomes the emphasis on monitoring and accountability, particularly the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other factors. We also commend the emphasis on the importance of the youth participation in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategies that impact their lives. Amnesty International regrets though that the paragraph on participation has not been broadened to include participation of all individuals, particularly of marginalized groups, including LGBTI youth.

This resolution comes at a crucial time for the future of the sustainable development agenda. This political consensus on the importance of human rights and gender equality in formulating and implementing development and population policies must be reflected and further advanced in the post-2015 process.

## **Background**

The Programme of Action was adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994. It is a landmark document agreed by consensus by 179 governments at the time, representing all regions of the world.

The Programme of Action recognized reproductive rights as human rights and declared that the principles of gender equality, equity and women's empowerment were crucial to effective population and development strategies. It also set out the standards on sexual and reproductive health and guided government and donor priorities ever since.

The 47<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on Population and Development was mandated to assess the status of implementation of the ICPD PoA over the past 20 years. It took place from 7 April to 11 April 2014 in New York.

After a week of intense negotiations, the Member States adopted by consensus an outcome document committing to increased efforts in implementing the ICPD PoA beyond 2014 and promoting sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in the development policies, including in the post-2015 development agenda.

Amnesty International joined others in advocating for sexual and reproductive rights for all, including on the key points raised in our written statement, available here: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.9/2014/NGO/16](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.9/2014/NGO/16)