



Amnesty International and RESURJ (Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice)

Joint statement

8 April 2014

AI Index: ACT 35/007/2014

47th session of the UN Commission on Population and Development: Governments are urged to deliver on sexual and reproductive rights

Governments and the United Nations are urged to prioritise the protection of sexual and reproductive rights in important negotiation processes taking place in New York. This message was conveyed to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Government representatives this week in meetings by Amnesty International Secretary General Salil Shetty and RESURJ, an alliance of young feminists.

“More than 280,000 people and 360 civil society organisations from all over the world have signed up to demand the recognition and protection of sexual and reproductive rights of young people” said Salil Shetty, who handed over this petition to Ban Ki-moon on behalf of the groups.

“Young people around the world are demanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including comprehensive and accurate sexuality education without discrimination. And crucially, for member states to guarantee these human rights in laws and policies, including by empowering young women and girls to safely exercise their rights,” added Salil Shetty.

The hand-over of the petition takes place in the midst of intense negotiations at the UN over the 20-year review of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its future implementation. Conservative states and groups are attempting to roll back on commitments made 20 years ago and prevent the inclusion of sexual and reproductive rights in further implementation of the ICPD and in the post-2015 agenda.

“Sexual and reproductive rights continue to be under threat”, said Marisa Viana from RESURJ (Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice).

”We therefore welcome and encourage the strong voices coming from states who are standing up for young people’s sexual and reproductive rights, particularly the rights of young women and adolescent girls who bear the brunt of gender inequality in every country.”

Amnesty International and RESURJ will also be presenting the petition to Ambassador Gonzalo Koncke Pizzorno of Uruguay, Chair of the 47th session of the Commission on Population and Development, and Ahmad Alhindawi, UN Special Envoy on Youth and other high level officials.

Despite commitments made nearly 20 years ago in the ICPD Programme of Action, around 1.8 million young people worldwide still struggle to access the sexual and reproductive health services, education and information they need they are entitled to receive. The leading cause of death for 15-19 year olds in the developing world are complications arising from early pregnancy and child birth.

Nearly 3,000 young people are infected with HIV every day, with almost twice as many young women living with HIV globally than young men. Yet only 34 per cent of young people in developing countries have the knowledge to answer the five basic questions about HIV and how to prevent it, far below the global target of 95% by 2010.

Fourteen million adolescent girls give birth every year, mainly as a result of coerced sex and unwanted pregnancy.

“Social prejudices and entrenched discrimination are among the biggest obstacles to empowering young people and achieving progress and development,” said Marisa Viana.

“Cultural and religious sensitivities cannot be used as an excuse for sexual and reproductive rights violations.”

“States must recognize young people are the present and the future of our communities, nations and the world!,” said Salil Shetty. “It’s high time their rights are prioritized at the Commission on Population and Development and in the post-2015 development agenda.”

Editor’s note: Pictures of the meeting with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and petition handover will be shared on Twitter @AmnestyUN.

To find out more about *My Body My Rights*, Amnesty International’s global campaign on sexual and reproductive rights, [click here](#).