



Amnesty International: Oral Statement for the Forty-Fifth Session of the Commission on Population and Development (April 23 – 27 2012)

Thursday 26 April 2012

Amnesty International welcomes the theme of the forty-fifth session of the Commission on Population and Development – ‘Adolescents and Youth’.

We welcome in particular the centrality this session gives to adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health. As the world reviews progress on the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, it is imperative that concerns regarding adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights are given serious attention.

Today, there are 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10-24 who do not yet have access to the comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and sexuality education that they need for a healthy life. It is crucial that their human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights, be respected, protected and fulfilled, and that they are allowed to participate meaningfully in decision making that impacts their life and well-being.

The World Programme of Action for Youth emphasizes the need for the full enjoyment by young people of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and also requires that Governments take effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms and promote non-discrimination, tolerance and respect for diversity. The Programme of Action also emphasises that action should be taken to eliminate discrimination against girls and young women and to ensure their full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms through comprehensive policies, plans of action and programmes on the basis of equality.

Fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health and rights is an integral part of adolescent and youth health, and has an impact on all aspects of a young person’s life; it must be prioritized. We call on the Commission on Population and Development to put this at the top of the agenda, by ensuring:

- Protection for sexual and reproductive rights as human rights, as established in Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action and other international agreements;
- Access for adolescents and youth to comprehensive sexuality education, information and services, with respect for their human rights, and with an emphasis on equity; and
- Removal of legal, policy and cultural barriers, including the requirement of parental and spousal consent for young people, particularly young women, to exercise their rights.

Adolescents and youth have the right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. It is most important, therefore, that the international community reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of existing international instruments on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Thank you

-ENDS-