



# ICPD =

International Conference on  
Population and Development  
Beyond 2014



## UNECE Regional Youth Conference

30 - 31 May 2013, Istanbul, Turkey

### CALL TO ACTION - SUMMARY

#### **Context**

Building upon the Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration, this *Call to Action*, from young sexual and reproductive rights advocates, identifies new and emerging issues facing today's generation of young people throughout the UNECE region, in relation to advancing the ICPD Programme of Action. At its heart, the *Call to Action* calls for the full integration of a rights-based approach to the ICPD Beyond 2014 and Post-2015 Development Agendas.

#### **Summary of Key Recommendations**

- Recognize sexual rights as human rights. This includes our right to a safe, satisfying and pleasurable sex life.
- Develop and implement effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure young people can report, and seek remedies and redress for violations of their human rights.
- Adopt a positive approach to sexuality, as necessary to securing our rights to privacy and bodily integrity.
- Respect, protect and fulfill our right to the highest standard of physical, mental and social health by ensuring access to comprehensive, integrated, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.
- Remove all structural, legal, policy, regulatory, and social barriers to realizing sexual and reproductive rights, including requirements for age of consent for medical services, and parental and spousal notification and consent.
- Respect, protect and fulfill our right to access to safe and legal abortion services, removing all structural, legal, policy, regulatory, and social barriers to abortion services including mandatory waiting periods, and requirements for parental and spousal notification or consent.
- Introduce and implement laws, policies and programmes aimed at preventing violence against us based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual expression.
- Develop and implement laws and policies which take a zero-tolerance approach to sexual and gender-based violence, and recognize unsafe abortion as a form of gender-based violence.

- Eliminate laws, policies and practices that perpetuate violence against us, and fulfill the obligation to guarantee access to justice for victims of violence.
- Eliminate laws, policies and programmes that discriminate against us, specifically our sexual and reproductive health and rights, including mandatory and coercive HIV, STI, and pregnancy testing, which violates our bodily autonomy, right to work, education, and freedom of movement.
- Ensure that all population and health-related programmes and policies are rights-based, eliminating all forms of sexual and reproductive coercion.
- Implement national policies and programmes that ensure all adolescents and young people have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, regardless of age or marital status, that respect our privacy, confidentiality and human rights.
- Respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of young women and girls, specifically our right to make free and informed decisions regarding our reproductive and sexual health and their right to bodily autonomy.
- Respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of all young migrants, regardless of migrations status, paying particular attention to our right to health and our sexual and reproductive rights.
- Adopt laws, policies and programmes related to education that are in line with the international human rights framework, allocating sufficient budgetary resources for full implementation.
- Prioritize evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education as an efficient and effective method of empowering us to make informed choices about our sexual lives, practice life skills and to explore attitudes and values.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful involvement of young people in the decision-making processes at every level and recognize youth involvement as a way to create a more sustainable society.
- Invest in building the capacities of young people to use existing national, regional and international human rights monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- Allocate resources, for quality research and ongoing and systematic gathering of data on young people, that is disaggregated by gender, age, region, marital status and other variables.

### **UNECE Regional Youth Conference: CALL TO ACTION**

Reaffirming the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and subsequent reviews, the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent reviews, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Earth Summit Agenda 21, and regional agreements including the European Convention on Human Rights, the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, among other relevant international and regional consensus documents.

Reaffirming our commitment to the Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration which identifies emerging priorities for advancing the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014, and calls for expanding the protection of young people's human rights.

Acknowledging that within the UNECE region, ratification and implementation of UN Conventions on basic human rights remains uneven. Violations of young people's human rights continue to be justified on the basis of cultural, traditional and religious values and practices.

Noting that the ongoing review of the ICPD beyond 2014 provides an opportunity to galvanize political will towards delivering on commitments made on the international stage to realize youth rights, and to address the emerging needs and realities for young people. The UNECE Regional Conference *Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century* provides an opportunity for young people to meaningfully engage in the decision-making processes that will affect our lives, and the lives of future generations.

Recognizing that involving young people in the UNECE Regional Conference is a step in a larger process of guaranteeing meaningful youth participation. Governments must expand opportunities by creating enabling environments and integrate young people, especially young women, into decision making structures. Governments, UN Agencies and civil society organizations must involve young people as equal partners in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policies and programmes that affect their lives, with special attention to actively involving youth who are traditionally marginalized.

Recognizing that we, as young people, experience marginalization along various and intersecting lines including gender, disability, migration and refugee status, ethnic minority identities including Roma and membership of the Travelling community, socioeconomic status and language; we experience marginalization for being young people who are afro-descendant, indigenous and first nations, drug users, sex workers, internally displaced young people, in school and out of school, in rural and urban areas, living with HIV/AIDS, and as young people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. Recognizing our diversities, we are not a homogenous group.

Recognizing that in our diversity what unites us is the fact that we are all rights holders. Our human rights must be protected within our communities, relationships and families.<sup>1</sup>

### **Respect, Protect and Fulfill the Human Rights of Young People**

1. In order to to achieve young people's full enjoyment of their human rights, and gender equality, governments must guarantee and protect the human rights of young people, including

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<sup>1</sup> Forms of families include but are not limited to: single parenthood, same sex couples, traditional, temporarily separated, displaced, child-led/headed, divorced, cohabiting, fostered, grandparents raising children, couples without children, migrants, extended and families including individuals with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions.

young human rights defenders, through ratifying international human rights conventions and harmonizing national laws with the requirements of these agreements. Governments must provide remedies and redress to rights holders whose rights have been violated.

2. Recognizing that sustainable societies rely on empowered individuals who are able to exercise their rights to obtain the highest possible levels of education, decent employment and quality health services, and live free of all forms of stigma, discrimination and violence, governments must integrate human rights principles throughout all laws, policies and programmes, particularly population and health-related policies and programmes. They must contain explicit guarantees to safeguard the sexual and reproductive rights of young people, taking measures to eliminate all forms of sexual and reproductive coercion.<sup>2</sup>

3. Governments, civil society organizations, and international agencies must monitor and ensure accountability to rights holders.

4. Government ministries must advance the implementation of international human rights conventions and the ICPD Programme of Action through effective policies and programmes.

5. In order to expand the scope of protection for young people's human rights, governments must recognize sexual rights<sup>3</sup> as human rights, including the right to a safe, satisfying and pleasurable sex life. Governments, civil society and UN Agencies must protect the right of young people to privacy, confidentiality and bodily integrity by adopting a positive approach to sexuality which empowers young people to make autonomous decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives.

### **Realize the Right to Education and Achieve Sustainable Development**

6. Respecting, protecting and fulfilling the human rights of young people, specifically the right to education, can lead to a more sustainable society by increasing our ability to respond to shifts in the global economic environment, access social services, obtain decent employment, and make positive choices regarding our sexualities and well-being. Addressing barriers to young people's access to education is critical to ensuring we obtain the highest possible levels of education. Factors which limit the ability of young people, particularly young women and girls, to access and stay in school include financial barriers, harmful and discriminatory practices such as early and forced marriage, lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, and inequitable gender stereotypes and norms.

7. In this context, Governments must establish laws, programmes and policies in line with the international human rights framework, and provide education for all young people that is non-

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<sup>2</sup> Sexual and reproductive coercion includes, but is not limited to: forced abortion, sterilization, HIV and pregnancy testing, and requirements for gender reassignment surgery as a prerequisite for obtaining legal documents.

<sup>3</sup> With reference to the WHO working definition of sexual rights, the Yogyakarta Principles, and Sexual Rights: an IPPF Declaration.

discriminatory, accessible, gender equitable and inclusive. Educational programmes must integrate life-skills, citizenship and comprehensive sexuality education. Governments must allocate budgetary resources that enable young people to access education free of financial barriers.

### **Ensure Access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

8. A needs and rights-based approach to comprehensive sexuality education seeks to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to determine and enjoy their sexuality physically and emotionally, individually and in relationships. It views sexuality holistically and within the context of emotional and social development it recognizes that information alone is not enough. Young people need to be given the opportunity to acquire essential life skills and develop positive attitudes and values.<sup>4</sup>

9. Governments must develop policies and programmes to ensure that young people have access to comprehensive sexuality education, delivered in formal and non-formal settings. Governments must monitor and evaluate these programmes to ensure effective and consistent delivery.

10. Governments must adequately resource comprehensive sexuality programmes, and invest in building the capacity of teachers and trainers to deliver programmes to a high standard.

### **Ensure Access to Youth Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health Services**

11. Governments must respect, protect and fulfill the right of all young people to the highest attainable standard of physical, mental and social health by ensuring access to comprehensive, integrated and youth-friendly health services, including harm reduction services and sexual and reproductive health services. These services must be provided free of charge, in locations with opening hours which facilitate access. Sexual and reproductive health services must, at a minimum, provide safe and legal abortion, maternity care, contraceptive counselling and a range of contraceptives including emergency contraception, and testing and treatment for HIV and sexually transmitted infections; services must be accessible by all adolescents, regardless of age or marital status.

12. Governments must remove all structural, legal, policy, regulatory, and social barriers to realizing sexual and reproductive rights and the right to confidentiality, including requirements for age of consent for medical services, parental and spousal notification and consent, and mandatory waiting periods. Governments must ensure health care workers receive adequate sensitivity training to provide non-judgemental and non-discriminatory services to all young people and adolescents, especially those who are marginalized. Additionally, governments

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<sup>4</sup> IPPF (2010) *IPPF Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education*. IPPF: London.

should implement appropriate mechanisms through which incidences of discrimination and coercion in health services can be reported and addressed.

### **Ensure Access to Safe and Legal Abortion Services**

13. Realizing the right of young women and girls to safe and legal abortion is crucial to ensuring the highest attainable standard of physical, mental and social health for young people, and to reducing the health impact of unsafe abortion.

14. Governments must remove all structural, legal, policy, regulatory, and social barriers to abortion services. Governments must ensure that the attitudes of service providers do not interfere with young people's right to access abortion services by allowing for conscientious objection only when there is an immediate referral pathway to an equally accessible, comparable service, which is acceptable to the service-user. At a minimum, safe abortion services must include the option of non-directive counseling and a complete range of high quality abortion services including medical and surgical abortion, and post-abortion care with the option of non-judgemental post-abortion counselling.

15. Governments, Civil Society Organizations, and UN Agencies must take measures to eliminate the stigma and discrimination experienced by young women who have accessed or seek to access abortion services, including information.

### **Eliminate Violence Against Young People**

16. Violence against young people is a human rights issue of international concern. It is not a private issue, but rather one requiring action.

17. Governments must eliminate violence through introducing and implementing laws that criminalize sexual and gender-based violence, early and forced marriage, domestic violence, marital rape, harmful cultural practices including female genital mutilation, honour killings, and all other forms of violence, with particular attention to ensuring the right of adolescent girls and young women to safety and bodily integrity; furthermore, Governments must recognize unsafe abortion as a form of gender-based violence. These laws must be supported by policies and programmes focused on prevention of violence, intervention where violence occurs, with attention to violence in relationships, families and communities, and guaranteeing access to justice for victims of violence.

18. Governments must introduce and implement laws, policies and programmes aimed at preventing violence against people based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual expression.

## **Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination**

19. Discrimination experienced by young people is deeply rooted in patriarchal beliefs about the need to control women's and young people's bodies, decisions and lives, which perpetuate inequitable socially-constructed gender norms and stereotypes. Addressing root causes is critical to eliminating stigma, discrimination, violence and inequalities, and can be achieved by adopting a positive approach to sexuality, recognizing young people's sexual rights, addressing the systematic denial of rights and providing access to justice.

20. In order to promote equality and social inclusion, governments must develop anti-discrimination protection mechanisms. Governments, civil society and UN agencies must provide sensitization training for law enforcement, medical professionals, media practitioners and other stakeholders working with vulnerable youth.

21. Governments must also eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices, including mandatory and coercive HIV, STI, and pregnancy testing, which violate young people's rights to health, bodily autonomy, employment, education, and freedom of movement. This requires the decriminalization of abortion, same-sex relationships and marriage, and sex work, as well as the removal of laws which criminalize people on the basis of HIV status, diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions.

## **Guarantee the Reproductive and Sexual Rights of Young Women and Girls**

22. When empowered with the right to choose, young people, in particular young women and girls, can access and stay in school longer, obtain decent employment, and improve health and well-being. These conditions contribute to stronger economies, a more sustainable workforce and healthier populations; all of which enhances sustainable development.

23. Governments must respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of young women and girls, specifically their right to make free and informed decisions regarding their reproductive and sexual health and their right to bodily autonomy.

## **Guarantee Migrants' Rights**

24. Acknowledging global shifts in migration trends, especially their impact on young people, is critical to developing effective migration policies that respond to young migrants' changing needs, realities and experiences.

25. Within this context, governments must realize the human rights of all young migrants, regardless of migration status, paying particular attention to their right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and their sexual and reproductive rights. Governments must establish flexible, rights-based migration policies, that are based on internationally recognized best practices, ILO standards in particular. Governments must facilitate young

migrants in accessing education, decent employment and income generating opportunities in their receiving countries and countries of origin.

26. In order to combat forced migration and trafficking, governments must create enabling environments to ensure young people who migrate do so safely, with their full and informed, free of stigma and discrimination.

### **Invest in Research and Data Collection on Youth**

27. The availability of valid, reliable, timely, relevant and comparable data is critical to developing effective policies and programmes. Governments and academic institutions must invest in quality research on young people, that is disaggregated by age, gender, region and marital status. Governments, civil society, UN agencies and academic institutions must also invest in peer-research methodologies and establishing programmes that build the capacity of young people to conduct quantitative and qualitative research on young peoples' needs and realities.

### **Ensuring Transparency and Accountability**

28. Effective monitoring mechanisms are essential to holding governments accountable to their obligations to protect the human rights of young people. Governments must develop greater monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure young people can report, and seek remedies and redress for violations of their human rights. Governments, in partnership with civil society and UN agencies, must strengthen monitoring mechanisms to combat corruption and ensure effective governance and transparency particularly with regards to budget allocation and spending. Governments must also invest in building the capacities of young people to use existing national, regional and international human rights monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and through the creation of national ombudsperson's for young people and future generations.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Including the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, Universal Periodic Review Processes and Special Procedures at the Human Rights Council.



**The UNECE Regional Youth Conference CALL TO ACTION was drafted by youth representatives of the following organizations:**

Action Canada for Population and Development  
Advocates for Youth  
Albania Community Assist (ACA)  
Albanian Centre for Population and Development  
All-Ukrainian Charity Peer to Peer Association (CPPA)  
Association for Development of the Medical Society  
ASTRA Youth  
Center for the Protection of Children  
Centre for Human Rights and Development Studies  
ChangeMob  
Choice For Youth and Sexuality  
Citizens Association "Life"  
dance4life  
East Europe and Central Asia Union of PLHIV  
European Students Forum (AEGEE)  
Georgian Youth Development and Education Association (GYDEA)  
Hamsol ba Hamsol  
Health Education and Research Association – H.E.R.A.  
HOPS - Healthy Options Project Skopje  
IFMSA  
Institute for Democratic Changes  
Kazakhstan Network of Women living with HIV  
Kyrgyz Indigo  
National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM)  
NGO Peer Educators Network (PEN)  
NGO Status  
Osez le Féminisme  
PETRI Sofia, Bulgaria  
Ponton  
Public Union "Youth Peer Educational Network Y-peer"  
Real World, Real People NGO  
Society Without Violence NGO  
Star-star: Global Network of sex work projects  
Toplum Gönüllüleri  
We & Civil Society  
Y-Factor  
Y-PEER  
Y-PEER Azerbaijan  
Y-SAFE  
YouAct: European Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights  
Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights