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Statement submitted by International Women's Health Coalition, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2011/100 and Corr.1.



Statement*

International conventions and agreements affirm that adolescents and young people have a right to receive comprehensive sexuality education that promotes gender equality and human rights. There is a clear and urgent need for the universal adoption of sexual education courses for adolescents and young people that build a foundation for a healthy and enjoyable sexual and reproductive life and enable them to make informed, voluntary, and safe decisions.

Today's generation of adolescents is the largest ever: there are 1.2 billion people between the ages of 10 and 19. To ensure they live healthy and satisfying sexual lives, young people need evidence-based, accurate information about their sexual and reproductive health, as well as skills and knowledge to negotiate relationships, to know their bodies and their rights, and to affirm each other's diversities. Comprehensive sexual education provides young people with the necessary skills and information to make free and informed decisions about their health, and enjoy satisfying sexual lives and healthy reproductive ones if and when they choose to make these choices.

Comprehensive sexual education programmes also ensure that health services are of good quality and accessible to youth and delivered with full respect for human dignity in all its diversity. And, within each country's legal framework, that they take into account the specific needs and demands of sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and young people, considering the diversity of sexual orientations and identities and gender expressions, and establishing suitable referral procedures within the health sector.

Taking into account the above commitments and the context and challenges faced by adolescents, States should ensure that international, regional, and national commitments include comprehensive sexual education programmes that:

- Provide information on sexuality that is appropriate for different age groups, and affirm people's diversities and differences including the diversity of sexual orientations and identities and gender expressions in order to promote respect for differences
- Promote attitudes that strive for gender equality
- Support young people in meeting their emotional, social, and health needs
- Teach young people necessary communication, negotiation, and critical thinking skills for healthy and equal relationships with a positive approach to sexuality
- Empower young people to demand respect for their bodies and their rights and to fully and freely consent to relationships and sexual activity that is free of violence
- Provide accurate and comprehensive information on health, including prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections

Furthermore, comprehensive sexual education curricula should:

- Include affirming, non-judgmental lesson plans about sexual and reproductive

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

health, gender equality, human rights, sexual behaviour and activity, sexual orientation, gender norms and variance, and physical disabilities

- Establish a strong foundation for young people to claim their sexual rights and exert leadership and citizenship based on respect for human rights
 - Be designed for effective delivery in all cultural contexts when adapted locally, and be able to be utilized by educators and trained peers both in and out of schools.
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