



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 May 2011

Original: English

Substantive session of 2011

Geneva, 4-29 July 2011

Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda*

High-level segment: annual ministerial review

Statement submitted by Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, 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.



Statement¹

The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) welcomes the decision of the annual ministerial review to focus on the theme “Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education” in its session in July 2011.

As of 2011, the Asia-Pacific region constitutes 60 per cent of the adolescents worldwide. Adolescents, especially those who are living in rural regions and who are less educated, poor, have disabilities, diverse gender identities and sexual orientations are facing particular physiological and sociocultural challenges.² Yet, the provision of sexuality education by the State remains a contentious issue, especially in countries where religious conservative fundamentalist parties hold considerable political power.³

The world’s Governments have, since 1994, agreed that comprehensive sexuality education and health services must be provided to adolescents and young people, in the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action of 1994, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and the General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS political declaration in 2006. The provision of sexuality and reproductive health education for in-school and out-of-school adolescents should be regarded as an effective and necessary intervention to achieve the MDGs.

Taking into account the above commitments and challenges, we call for:

(a) The provision of a universal, comprehensive, gender-sensitive and evidence-based sexuality education curriculum that includes diversity and rejects any form of discrimination, enabling adolescents to make informed and strategic life choices about their sexual and reproductive health and rights free from sexual violence, coercion, unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV;

(b) The provision of comprehensive sexuality education in both formal settings of schools and informal settings of communities;⁴

(c) The recognition of the need to base comprehensive sexuality education programmes on a human rights framework, including the right to be free from discrimination, coercion and violence and human rights based on positive ethical principles of bodily integrity, dignity, equality and respect for diversity that portray sexuality in an affirmative way.⁵

¹ The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

² The fall in the age of puberty (9-14 for boys and 8-13 for girls) implies an earlier onset of adolescence, sexual maturity and ability to reproduce among adolescents and the earlier prevalence of sexual and gender inequalities in many Asian and the Pacific societies.

³ Sivananthi Thanenthiran and Sai Jyothirmal Racherla, *Reclaiming & Redefining Rights — ICPD+15: Status of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Asia* (Kuala Lumpur, ARROW, 2009).

⁴ Sexuality education means education about all matters related to sexuality and its expression, including education about reproductive processes, puberty and sexual behaviour, information on contraception and protection from sexually transmitted infections, as well as on issues such as relationships, sexual roles, gender relations, social pressures to be sexually active and information about sexual and reproductive health services, including training in communication and decision-making skills.

⁵ Radhika Chandiramani, “Why Affirm Sexuality?”, in *ARROWs for Change*, vol. 13, No. 2 (Kuala Lumpur, ARROW, 2007).