

High-Level Task Force for ICPD

RIGHTS, DIGNITY & HEALTH FOR ALL

Statement on the Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

The High-Level Task Force for the ICPD welcomes the Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We acknowledge with appreciation the broad-based consultative process undertaken and the dedication of the Panel Members, the Secretariat and authors of the report, as well as the many individuals and organizations in and outside the United Nations System, including women's and youth organizations, who have worked diligently to provide their contributions and share their vision of a better world for all humanity.

We welcome the Panel's calls for ending extreme poverty, hunger, illiteracy and preventable deaths, but also for going beyond, "to start countries on the path of sustainable development"; affirming freedom of information, speech and of the media, the rule of law and access to justice, and building accountable and transparent institutions as "core elements of wellbeing, not optional extras". We assert the need for independent and rigorous monitoring and accountability systems involving states and civil society, while ensuring all have a voice in decisions affecting their lives; and welcome the call for a 'data revolution', which should be rights-based and equity-focused. And while the new development agenda should build on existing UN Member State agreements, we embrace the notion that we should strive "to go beyond previous agreements to make people's lives better".

More specifically, we especially welcome the Report's findings and recommendations on fundamental priorities shared by the High-Level Task Force for the ICPD and a large global constituency, in particular:

- A stand-alone goal on the empowerment of women and girls and achieving gender equality, alongside the proposal to mainstream gender equality across all other goals and targets. We note with particular appreciation the inclusion of what has been a major 'missing MDG': the elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls. This provides the basis for developing concrete commitments and specific targets for operationalization on both the prevention and response domains as this process unfolds. Similarly, we welcome the target on ending a specific form of gender-based violence perpetrated against adolescent girls: child marriage. Overall, we acknowledge with appreciation the efforts to adopt a more comprehensive approach than what is currently in the MDGs, and expect that the process will expand more precisely and holistically in this central area of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.
- The affirmation of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights as essential to healthy societies, to the empowerment of women and girls and achieving gender equality. These are fundamental human rights that should be respected, protected and fulfilled for all individuals, as they are cross-cutting dimensions of people's lives.
- The recognition of adolescents' and youth's needs and rights, to education, life skills, employment opportunities, health, including access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and as active

participants in decision-making. We consider, nonetheless, that the scope is somewhat limited and that adolescents as a specific group require greater focus and attention.

A related concern is the omission of a target on what has been a consistently voiced demand throughout the consultative process, including by youth from around the world as reflected in the Bali Youth Forum Declaration (2012): universal access to comprehensive sexuality education for all young people, in and out of school. This is a basic right that should be understood as integral to the concept of quality, relevant education that equips individuals, as the Report itself states, with basic “skills for life”. Comprehensive sexuality education goes beyond “an understanding of sexual and reproductive health”, to provide knowledge, critical thinking and decision-making skills that all young people need to stay healthy, fully develop their personal potential, and plan their lives. It is also a key element for enabling countries to secure the demographic dividend of economic growth referred to in the Report, and must be considered a necessary element for the proposed target on achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We note that HIV and AIDS and population dynamics receive minimal treatment in the Report. The impact of HIV and AIDS on individuals, communities, societies and development prospects is well known, especially in the hardest hit regions, with women, young people and marginalized groups at particularly high risk. Understanding and integrating relevant population data projections and trends analysis is an essential tool for sound national-to-global planning, including for setting targets and achieving commitments under the new global development framework.

Overall, we consider that a stronger human rights-based approach should be reflected throughout, reinforcing international human rights standards and State obligations under international law, with explicit reference to especially marginalized groups facing systematic discrimination, including on the basis of age, sex, race, ethnicity, class, caste, religious affiliation, marital status, occupation, disability, HIV status, national origin, immigration status, language, sexual orientation or gender identity, among other factors.

The Report provides a noble contribution and reference point to the inter-governmental processes and preparations underway, specifically the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals, the General Assembly Special Event on Achieving the MDGs, the forging of a forward-looking agenda for the twenty-year review of ICPD implementation, and the submission of the Secretary-General’s report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda to the General Assembly.

As these preparations and deliberations evolve, we urge that the above-mentioned observations and goals and targets be taken into account, retained and used as a basis upon which to build more precise, meaningful and robust commitments, with *qualitative* and quantitative targets. These should form part of transparent and effective monitoring and accountability systems that ensure ‘no one is left behind’, that meaningfully involve civil society, including women’s and youth movements, and that a truly integrated approach to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development as aspired to in the Report will thereby be achieved, with people and their human rights squarely at the centre.