

# High-Level Task Force for ICPD

RIGHTS, DIGNITY & HEALTH FOR ALL

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## **Global Panel of Experts Calls for Bolder Action From Governments and International Community to Meet Commitments Made at International Conference On Population And Development (ICPD)**

### **High-Level Task Force For ICPD Releases: [Policy Recommendations for ICPD Beyond 2014: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for All](#)**

“While we are encouraged by the achievements of ICPD implementation, the challenge is that too many people around the world are still denied their sexual and reproductive health and rights. These fundamental freedoms and human rights lie at the very core of human dignity.”

— H.E. Tarja Halonen, former president of Finland, co-chair of High-Level Task Force for ICPD

(April 25, 2013, New York, NY) The [High-Level Task Force for ICPD](#) is urging governments and the international community to take much bolder action to meet and build on commitments they made at the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994. As the 20-year review of progress toward ICPD goals gets underway, the Task Force today released its position paper, entitled, “Policy Recommendations for ICPD Beyond 2014: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for All.” The paper proposes specific steps that must be taken to ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women, adolescents and youth become central components of ICPD Beyond 2014, as well as the post-2015 and Sustainable Development Goals agenda. The Task Force is also calling for increased accountability mechanisms to ensure concerted action by governments to achieve these goals.

The High-Level Task Force for ICPD is an independent body created in 2012, comprised of [internationally respected government ministers, parliamentarians and civil society leaders](#) and chaired by former Presidents Tarja Halonen of Finland and Joaquim Alberto Chissano of Mozambique. It is the only high-level group in the world dedicated to the ICPD review process. The Task Force recommendations released today reflect the demands of key constituencies from every region of the world.

“We find ourselves in an historic moment at the United Nations,” stated **Former President Halonen**, in advance of an event at The Ford Foundation to launch the position paper. “The international community must forge a forward-looking agenda to ensure human rights, human security, equality and social justice for all. While we are encouraged by the achievements of ICPD implementation, the challenge is that too many people around the world are still denied their sexual and reproductive health and rights. These fundamental freedoms and human rights lie at the very core of human dignity.”

Halonen highlighted four main recommendations of the Task Force for government action:

1. Respecting, protecting and fulfilling sexual and reproductive rights for all through public education and legal and policy reforms
2. Achieving universal access to quality, comprehensive and integrated sexual and reproductive health information, education and services
3. Ensuring universal access to comprehensive sexuality education for all young people
4. Eliminating violence against women and girls and securing universal access to critical services for all victims/survivors of gender-based violence

Within those four areas are recommendations for specific actions on a range of issues, including ending unsafe

abortion, other acts of violence against women and girls, and ensuring equality under the law regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, HIV or other status.

The position paper recognizes that millions of lives have been improved and saved because of actions taken to implement the Cairo agreement—including through reductions of maternal mortality and increases in HIV prevention and treatment services in some countries. Yet despite the existence of multiple, high impact preventative measures, the facts show that sexual and reproductive health problems continue to needlessly afflict millions of women, men and young people, especially those living in poverty. The Task Force paper highlights key statistic, such as:

- 800 women die every day due to avoidable pregnancy and childbirth-related complications
- 222 million women who would like to prevent pregnancy are not using modern contraception—contributing to 80 million unplanned pregnancies and 20 million unsafe abortions that occur each year
- One in three girls under 18 will be married without their consent in low and middle-income countries
- As many as 7 in 10 women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetimes.

“Addressing these global problems, which undermine human rights and inhibit individual health and well-being and the sustainable development of societies, requires determined political commitment backed by resources,” stated **Former President Chissano**. “Investments in sexual and reproductive health are proven, cost-effective, measures. What the High-Level Task Force for ICPD proposes is not only the right thing to do; it is also common sense. We urge countries to build and capitalize on what has already been accomplished through the ICPD Programme of Action, to reinvigorate those commitments and to translate them into concrete benchmarks for the global development agenda.”

Expanding on the Task Force call for universal access to comprehensive sexuality education for all young people, both in and out of school, **Ishita Chaudhry**, Task Force member and Founder of The YP Foundation in India, stated: “Increasingly, young people, especially young women and girls are articulating their right to access Comprehensive Sexuality Education so that they can live just and healthy lives. In our lived realities, this is our claim to live a life free of stigma and discrimination, where we are empowered to negotiate our own sexual and reproductive choices and are given the resources to do so. These directly impact our ability to go to school, to access employment and to enter into relationships by choice that are free from violence. All this contributes strongly to breaking the cycle of poverty that many women and girls are in. “

The Task Force recommendations are designed to guide government delegates as they prepare their official positions for upcoming regional and global UN deliberations on the ICPD Beyond 2014 agenda. These recommendations will be widely circulated and shared with government and civil society stakeholders and networks involved in this process. Task Force members will also highlight the position paper recommendations at forums and gatherings being held as part of the ICPD Beyond 2014 process.

The High-Level Task Force for ICPD position paper is available in [full-length and summary](#) versions.

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*The High-Level Task Force for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was established in September 2012 as an independent body to provide a bold, progressive voice for advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, especially for those living in poverty and otherwise marginalized, and to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and young people. For more information, see <http://www.icpdtaskforce.org>.*