

World Youth Alliance (WYA)

Thank you Mister/Madam Chair.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Youth Alliance, a global coalition of young people, welcomes the theme of the 47th Commission, and looks forward to the general discussion and outcome documents of this session.

While much progress has been achieved in implementing the Programme of Action, there remains much room for improvement in the areas of reproductive health, sustainable development, the family and maternal health.

This last issue is especially important, since there is still developing regions with high maternal mortality ratios, like for example, Afghanistan where the probability that a 15-year old female die from a maternal cause is 1 in 32 whereas in developed regions this is only 1 in 3,800. This ratio can be drastically lowered with inexpensive measures that have been proven effective by historical examples like Sweden.

Mister/Madam Chair, I come from a family of 8 brothers and sisters and luckily, my mother didn't had any problem regarding her maternity whatsoever. But this is not only luck. Chile, my country, is an international example on maternal mortality reduction. Chile is also an historical example demonstration that abortion services are not necessary to reduce maternal mortality ratios.

In 1931, Chile legalized abortions when necessary to save the life of the mother. Six years later, the MMR rose to its highest rate in our history, at 989.

Public policies like compulsory education laws, strengthening of maternal and infant health programs, water and sewer improvements and a mother-child law that provided for prenatal care made our MMR decrease by 72.6%, from 989 to 270 in 1957.

Skilled birth attendance increased from 61% of births in 1957 to more than 90% by 1980, and 99% by 1990. In 1990, abortion became illegal again, and the MMR dropped from 42 in 1990 to 18 in 2004. This is a 56% decline in less than 15 years, and the largest proportional decrease was seen in the poorest quintile. Today, Chile has the lowest maternal mortality ratio of Latin America.

Mister/Madam Chair, the World Youth Alliance has developed a consciousness study on this subject and determined the direct interventions needed to help every woman and baby to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth are clear and within reach for developing countries:

- (1) Access to skilled birth attendants, who in combination with back-up emergency obstetric care can reduce the maternal mortality ratio by 75 percent, according to the UNFPA.
- (2) At least four prenatal care visits, as recommended by the WHO.
- (3) Minimally equipped birthing facilities, with essential medicines and equipment to treat and deal with the major complications in pregnancy; and
- (4) Health care delivery system infrastructure, including education, which empowers women to make appropriate health decisions, and transportation, which enables them to reach birthing facilities in time.

Mister/Madam Chair, The World Youth Alliance, see with major concerns how ideological positions take place in such an important debate. We cannot play with the lives of the million women who, like my mother, bring people to this world; we need, urgently, to protect them with safe childbearing and birth and for that, to focus in the solutions that are proven effective.

Thank you