We can shape a world where every human being can live with dignity, safety, and choice: UK National Statement at the 59th session of the Commission on Population and Development

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Statement by the UK Youth Delegate, at CPD 59.

The United Kingdom reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the protection and advancement of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights.

These are fundamental to global stability, equality, and crucially, to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Today, as a UK youth representative, I stand alongside other youth delegates who know from lived experience that only young people know our own realities, and that our voices must be central to shaping the policies affecting our futures.

We champion a youth-centred, rights-based approach, one that is inclusive and accessible to young people in all our diversity, including women and girls, LGBTQ+ youth, migrants and refugees, and those in the Global South.

Injustice travels. Rights do not erode in isolation. Concerted efforts to roll back on the right to bodily autonomy for women and girls are linked to broader attempts to control identities and sexualities diverging from heteronormative, patriarchal norms.

These struggles are connected, crossing borders and communities, impacting even men and boys.

With rights under threat worldwide, the UK champions the absolute necessity of multilateralism.

No country can protect these freedoms alone.

Global cooperation is key to uphold international norms and to safeguard sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Advancing the rights of women and girls is a top priority for the UK.

We value the critical role and mandates of UN agencies whose reach and expertise are crucial to achieving the rights and freedoms of women and girls for their full empowerment.

This week, we are exploring how population, technology, and research will shape sustainable development.

Young people, especially women and girls, face growing barriers to reliable information, education and services, barriers technology could help dismantle if used responsibly.

We must work together to bridge the digital divide by addressing infrastructure gaps and gendered disparities so that digital health solutions reach rural, remote, and low-resource settings.

Online platforms and telehealth must be tools of empowerment, not exclusion.

Otherwise, technology risks deepening existing inequalities based on gender, class, and geography.

We must also tackle technology-facilitated gender-based violence such as non-consensual intimate images, deepfakes, and the weaponisation of AI.

Governments must strengthen policy and hold tech companies accountable to safeguard women and girls in digital spaces.

We further emphasise the importance of mandatory, age-appropriate, gender-transformative Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

CSE must be embedded in school curricula alongside protecting online spaces so that accurate information is not censored.

We must strengthen digital literacy for girls and marginalised youth if technology is to serve as a gateway, not a barrier, to exercising their rights.

In humanitarian crises, particularly in the context of reducing ODA, women and girls must remain a priority.

Conflict and displacement heighten risks of violence, early marriage, unintended pregnancies, and life-threatening health-care gaps.

Governments must honour their commitment to SRHR as a human right, ensuring continued access to lifesaving services.

Technological innovation and research should serve these aims, not fuel conflict and violence.

Real change does not come from the efforts of a few but from action across society, especially from those who have the power and resources to make it happen.

It is crucial we build alliances; sharing power not only between governments but with civil society, youth leaders, and communities.

Advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as access to safe abortion, must be grounded in local realities and driven at local, national, and global levels.

It is vital we all work together, including with men and boys, to overcome the structural barriers that maintain systems of gender inequality.

We do not want mere promises of change; we want planned, systemic action.

Together, we can, and we must, shape a world where every human being can live with dignity, safety, and choice.

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-can-shape-a-world-where-every-human-being-can-live-with-dignity-safety-and-choice-uk-national-statement-at-the-59th-session-of-the-commission-on-po