

## **STATEMENT BY SAINT LUCIA**

### **ICPD 25, Nairobi, Nov 14, 2019**

Madam Chair, fellow ministers, distinguished delegates, and members of Civil Society.

On this occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ICPD, the Government of Saint Lucia reiterates our commitment to reduce maternal mortality, promote gender equality, and to prevent violence against women.

The Nairobi Statement on ICPD25 suffers from serious defects which my government cannot ignore. It goes far beyond the Cairo consensus, which balanced differing views among Member States to reflect common ground. It is clear from this document, drafted in private with minimal input from Member States, and yet claiming to speak for all countries, that this conference is designed to tip the scales towards values and ideologies supported primarily by developed countries without regard for the common ground found in 1994.

In fact, this process has shown no regard for common norms of United Nations practice. Throughout the document there are references to the SDGs, attempting to use SDG mechanisms and provisions despite their status as a separate, properly negotiated documents. The Nairobi Statement even attempts to co-opt the High Level Political Forum and other review mechanisms to promote commitments which do not enjoy consensus and were not even properly negotiated.

“Commitments” included which do not enjoy consensus comprise:

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Although reproductive rights are included in the ICPD Programme of Action (POA), they are

limited. This document restricts with one endnote, and expands with another, through the incorporation of outcomes of other reviews that similarly went beyond the Cairo consensus. Today, SRHR is widely understood to include abortion, which is not agreed in international law. The 1994 Programme of Action recognized that abortion is a matter for national policy in paragraph 8.25. This Nairobi Statement references this restriction only once, and also incorporates references which have no such restrictions.

- Comprehensive Sexuality Education(CSE). CSE includes material *most* would find inappropriate for children. The ICPD respected the rights of parents, which the Nairobi Statement never mentions. Nor is there any specific content indicated in the ICPD allowing states to determine educational content appropriate to their own cultures and settings.
- The terms “sexual orientation,” “gender identity”, and “gender expression” have no agreed international definitions. Rather than work to build true consensus on these controversial and relatively novel terms, Member States are expected to accept them without question.

The Cairo consensus makes clear that each Member State has sovereign rights to determine their own development priorities in line with their national development priorities. This pluralism is essential to achieving development. Each nation is in the best position to know what it needs to develop and how best to take into account its history, culture, needs, and values.

In line with this, ICPD also expressly recognizes that laws relating to abortion can only be decided at the national level through domestic legislative processes.

A number of Member States have chosen not to attend this meeting, indicating that the document we are being asked to accept does not enjoy consensus, just as it is clear that it is intended to go far beyond the actual agreement of 1994. And yet, an “unofficial event” that side stepped real negotiations claims to speak for “all stakeholders, present and not present.” We, who are present here, in solidarity with our peers and in accordance with the basic tenets of international law and the customs of negotiating political consensus documents, reject any notion of imposing commitments on States not present, particularly controversial provisions which do not enjoy consensus.

We therefore register the aforementioned concerns and distance Saint Lucia from any outcomes of this conference that undermine life and family and disrespect our laws and culture.

I thank you.