

Verbal statement by the European Network of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF EN) at the sixty-sixth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, Copenhagen, 12 – 15 September 2016 on the *Action plan for sexual and reproductive health: towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Europe – leaving no one behind.*

In my position as Regional Director of the European Network of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, I am speaking on behalf of members, staff and volunteers across 36 countries, ranging from my own native Ireland as far as Central Asia, from Scandinavia to the Balkans and the Mediterranean.

IPPF strongly welcomes and supports the WHO's action plan on all levels, but particularly the understanding that the sexual and reproductive health of young people is fundamental to triggering lifelong health and wellbeing.

I was particularly struck by a recent speech of the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, who spoke of our collective 'amnesia' as adults on our adolescence. How we felt, what we struggled to understand, how we did or did not develop the confidence and life-skills to become strong, secure adults able to enter into loving relationships and lead healthy and productive lives.

Across Europe and Central Asia, life is becoming ever more challenging. We are all seeing the repercussions of economic and political instability on the physical and mental health of our citizens, and the resulting pressure on our health services. So the question that governments face in this changing world is how to build resilient populations? People who are mentally, emotionally and physically capable of withstanding stress and uncertainty and who can continue to hold together the fabric of our societies, even in difficult times.

IPPF's 60 years' experience has shown us how our field makes a fundamental contribution to lifelong health and wellbeing, helping to create healthy families and resilient societies.

We have learned when we take an approach that empowers people, especially young people, with knowledge and information on this part of life which is so critical to all of us, they use it to make healthy and responsible choices. We must remember the choices we made during our adolescence and beyond and how these were informed. Let's ask ourselves if we can do better for the next generations – because we cannot afford not to.

Thus, IPPF and our members and volunteers applaud this action plan which reaffirms the absolute necessity of a coherent, holistic 'whole of life' approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights based on gender equity and human rights.

In particular today, I am representing the vibrant movement of young people at the heart of IPPF and our members. Their message is clear: If we want sustainable development, it is time for Europe and Central Asia to agree the main actions necessary to promote SRHR. So we urge the member states to adopt this resolution and embrace an action plan which goes to the heart of who we are in Europe – nations who trust and empower our citizens so they live and love healthily and happily throughout their lives.