

Joint Oral Statement by Arab and Asian CSOs to CPD48

Commission on Population and Development

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Speaking on behalf of a cross-regional group of civil society advocates representing Asian and Arab countries, I have the following messages and demands:

Since the ICPD beyond 2014 Global Review, and particularly the outcomes of the Regional Review Conferences on the ICPD, there is greater recognition that much work is still needed to secure universal sexual and reproductive health and rights globally, and especially in our respective countries. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are indivisible, inalienable human rights. However, these rights are far from being fully addressed. This seriously undermines the possibility of achieving sustainable and inclusive development in our region.

As we are discussing the integration of population issues in sustainable development and particularly the Post-2015 development agenda during this 48th session of the CPD, it remains of utmost importance for the Asian and Arab region that the *universality* of sexual and reproductive health and rights is put at the center of the debate. Many of our countries face serious challenges due to instability, insecurity, and large numbers of refugees and migrants. Unsafe migration is rampant. Moreover, we see an increase in religious and political conservatism and fundamentalism across our region. These challenges aggravate existing gender inequality and poor sexual and reproductive health and rights, along with limited space for civil society to address these issues. Proliferation of early and forced marriage, sexual and gender based violence, female genital mutilation, unplanned and teenage pregnancies are reasons for grave concern. Access to quality sexual and reproductive health information, education and services, including modern contraceptives; safe abortion services; and STI prevention, counseling and treatment in the Asian and Arab regions is inadequate and insufficient. This deprivation of information, education and services leads to the daily violation of human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, particularly harming women and girls, young people and adolescents, refugees and migrants.

To ensure the realization of universal sexual and reproductive health and rights, we recommend our Governments: to ensure universal access to comprehensive sexuality

education and sexual and reproductive health services – particularly reaching women and girls, young people and adolescents, refugees and migrants; to eliminate and address all forms of violence and discrimination; and to empower and meaningfully engage youth, and adolescents, particularly young women, in the decision-making processes on policies and programs that affect their lives.

We call on our governments to follow up on the commitments made in the Regional Review Conferences, and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Integrating population issues in the Post-2015 development agenda needs to be human rights based, as reflected in the ICPD Programme of Action and its key actions for further implementation. It needs to put gender equality, human rights and the universality of sexual and reproductive health and rights at its core. Only then we will see persistent inequalities, stigma and discrimination addressed; only then we can see the transformational change the Post-2015 development agenda envisions.