

DECLARATION ON HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We are young people of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural and economic backgrounds committed to building a world in which we can realize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. As the international community creates the post-2015 development agenda, we recognize that to effect change the new development framework must respond to the authentic needs of the person. The flourishing of the human person, characterized by physical, emotional, mental and spiritual growth, must be the starting point and the ultimate goal of all efforts to make development sustainable.

Sustainable development necessitates that the fundamental needs of the person be met by ensuring access to clean water and sanitation, nutrition, housing, education, employment and healthcare. The global reality still requires a focus on the basic health needs of the population. An emphasis on prevention and an attention to providing basic resources, including access to affordable medicines, sanitary conditions, medical staff and infrastructure, through accessible quality health care systems will improve the health of a nation and enhance human flourishing. Our greatest resource is the potential of the human person, and healthy and educated populations are key to a nation's prosperity and productivity.

For pressing global health issues, including the rising number of deaths from non-communicable diseases, we applaud approaches that promote healthier lifestyles and responsible behaviors, which foster authentic sustainable development. Recognizing the many and varied health issues confronting our world, we draw special attention to HIV/AIDS, maternal health and reproductive health since policies and programs in these areas most often distort the proper understanding of the intrinsic dignity of the human person.

With regard to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, a person-centered response has as its focus the intrinsic dignity of the person, and as its aim the goal of maximizing the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS programs and education. It is imperative that the emphasis remain on education about the science of transmission and the importance of risk avoidance. Delaying age of sexual debut, promoting reduction of multiple concurrent partners and encouraging mutual fidelity are effective risk avoidance strategies that prioritize changing the underlying behavior that puts a person in a position of harm. We call for a shift away from short-term development aid solutions, such as the overreliance on condom promotion, which only reduce harm. We urge the international community to embrace evidence-based interventions that have been proven to work.

Sustainable development is only achievable if the tragedy of maternal mortality is drastically reduced. The death of a mother devastates her family and the broader community, but it is preventable through the implementation of key interventions such as prenatal care, skilled birth attendants, adequately equipped birthing facilities and health care delivery system infrastructure, including education and transportation. Pregnancy and childbirth can be safe if governments, civil society and the private sector work together to provide essential interventions designed to meet the needs of multi-cultural communities and to educate people about the needs of a woman in pregnancy and childbirth.

Reproductive health represents another crucial component of sustainable development. We affirm the definition of reproductive health in the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, and urge the international community to develop policies and programs that protect and promote the health of women and men with full respect for cultural and religious backgrounds. We call for knowledge-based reproductive health programs that empower individuals to understand their bodies and make informed decisions concerning their right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children. Knowledge leads to healthy behaviors, which in turn contribute to the development of a healthier population for the future.

An accurate understanding of our global health needs is critical for person-centered development. We encourage young people to share this message with their respective communities and to pursue choices that contribute to a healthy lifestyle and a sustainable future.