

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, and fellow advocates.

Family Planning NSW is honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the International Women's Development Agency and Plan International Australia, with the support of the Australasian Society of HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine. We are also members of the Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights is an essential component of health and wellbeing and has a significant impact on enabling member states to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Our approach needs to be inclusive of priority populations who currently experience poorer health outcomes to ensure we leave no one behind, including adolescents, young people, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous people, and others experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

In line with the theme of this 56th Commission, we wish to emphasise the critical role of education in supporting positive sexual and reproductive health and respect for the rights of every person in every community. Evidence has consistently shown that providing comprehensive sexuality education, known as CSE, leads to fewer unplanned pregnancies, lower rates of sexually transmissible infections, and development of health literacy to better access and navigate health services. CSE programs can also have a significant impact on supporting the rights of women and girls, improving gender equality and healthy relationships, reducing child marriage, and reducing maternal mortality. Whether delivered in schools or community settings, CSE improves health and wellbeing, which results in benefits to the whole community.

Provision of professional learning programs is also a key component of education in this sphere to ensure enough people in the workforce have the skills, knowledge and overall approach to support positive health outcomes. Professional learning enables provision of clinical services by doctors, nurses, midwives and other health professionals, along with training of those who provide education and health promotion in schools and community settings, including in humanitarian contexts.

The delegates here today are in a unique position to strengthen existing systems which are working well and influence change to ensure all people have access to essential sexual and reproductive health care, regardless of their age, gender, location or level of income. This includes access to screening and prevention programs, such as those addressing cervical cancer and STIs, and quality clinical care which enables people to make informed decisions which are best suited to their preferences and personal circumstances, such as family planning, including contraception.

We call on Member States to commit to actions which recognise the essential role of sexual and reproductive health and rights in achieving broader health, social and economic outcomes and making progress towards the SDGs. This must be accompanied by investment in, and implementation of, evidence based programs which support universal access to sexual and reproductive health care and education using a rights based framework.

