



**To the Delegates of the ICPD+5
June 29, 1999
World Youth Alliance
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I am speaking today on behalf of the World Youth Alliance, which represents millions of the world's youth from different religious, cultural and geographic areas of the world. We do not claim to speak for all of the estimated 3 billion youth in the world today; but nor should the other youth caucus assembled here claim to speak for them. Rather, we speak to you today about the true concerns and desires of the majority of the world's youth.

The youth of the world support parental rights, duties and responsibilities. They see these rights not as a competing threat to their own rights or freedoms, but as complementary elements in which their parents provide security and direction, guiding their children to adulthood and maturity. The primary concern of the world's youth is not achieving complete and total sexual liberation and sexual and reproductive health and rights, nor do they desire to erase the ties which they have with their parents. The primary concern of adolescents and young people is their family and the community that they are a part of. Parental discipline and guidance is crucial to the adolescent's successful life decisions at this vital stage of their lives.

We have witnessed some incredible proposals in the negotiations this week and throughout the Cairo +5 Prepcom. There has been a direct assault on fundamental human rights documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which gives parents the prior right to choose their child's education and direct their development. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights give parents the specific right to direct the moral and religious upbringing of their children. What is the reason for ignoring and contravening UN treaties ratified by state parties?

More than this, these proposals to remove parental rights language make no sense and would achieve no support amongst those who have invested their lives in the study of the development of children and adolescents. In every culture, research shows that adolescents are engaged in the fewest risk behaviors when parental bonds

remain intact and when parents exercise their supervisory roles. Academic research shows conclusively that adolescents are still developing the cognitive skills required to make decisions outside of their own personal frame of reference, and to fully consider the long term consequences of their actions and decisions which they make.

Because the adolescent is still developing cognitively, intellectually and physically, sex education without parental involvement in the developed world has repeatedly failed. It is no coincidence that the introduction of sex education at earlier and earlier stages of a child's development, has led to increased rates of teenage sexual activity, contraceptive use, pregnancy, STD's and HIV/AIDS. The link between sex education and the epidemic levels to which these consequences have soared can no longer be ignored. It is unconscionable for us to continue to promote these lifestyles and actions to the world's youth. Neither should the developed world impose these failed ideals upon the developing world.

Our solution is to be found in the ICPD Programme of Action. Section 7.45 clearly outlines the language which we need to use – carefully crafted language which balances the needs of the developing adolescent with the adolescent's need for guidance and direction. Parental rights are for the protection of children and youth, not for the benefit of parents. Removing parental rights, duties and responsibilities from the Cairo + 5 document will jeopardize, rather than benefit youth.

The majority of the world's youth, particularly youth in the developing nations, are concerned about issues other than their sexual and reproductive rights. Youth are concerned about their families, their friends, their education, and their physical and mental well being and development. The day to day lives of millions of youth around the world depend so much more upon adequate resources in areas of basic development. Clean water, sanitation, nutrition, basic health care and education are not just a wish list: they are the immediate and crucial concerns of the world's youth.

Parental rights promote youth rights. The World Youth Alliance urges all of the delegates to recognize the importance of parental rights for the world's youth. Please retain and endorse language recognizing the rights, duties and responsibilities of parents in the final document.