YOUTH SPACE at the HRC to ensure the protection of young people’s Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

Side event during the 35th session of the Human Rights Council

8 June 2017, Geneva, Switzerland

Time: 1500 to 1630: Room IX

Young people face multiple obstacles and discrimination when claiming their human rights. At present, there are no institutionalised processes for young people to engage with or speak up at the Human Rights Council (HRC), which is one of the most important human rights mechanisms in the world. Leaving out the voices and concerns of young people from such an important platform, jeopardizes the accuracy and impact of policies and decisions taken at the HRC. One particular area of concern in terms of young people’s human rights is the realisation and protection of their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Ensuring the realisation and implementations of young people’s SRHR is the first step to ensure that they are empowered and can make informed choices about their lives.

The World YWCA pioneered the first ever pre-Youth Forum before a regular session of the HRC in June 2016. On 2 June 2017, the World YWCA will build on its successes and host its second annual Youth Forum to encourage stakeholders to institutionalise youth voices during HRC sessions and in their decisions. More than 200 young people are expected to be present at the Youth Forum and to come together to mobilise and draft an outcome declaration expanding on the current concerns that hinder their empowerment. The World YWCA wishes to co-host a side event on 8 June at the Palais des Nations during the 35th session of the HRC, to highlight the outcomes of the Youth Forum with a special focus on SRHR as the building block to all other forms of empowerment.

Specific objectives of the side event include the following:

• Emphasise the importance of including young people’s voices regarding their SRHR at the HRC,

• Explore how frameworks related to the realisation of young people’s SRHR, such as the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA), can be amplified and monitored through the HRC,

• To present the outcome of the pre-HRC Youth Forum and ask that the HRC includes youth voices in its ways of working and in its decisions,
Intergenerational discussion

Methodology

The side event will host an intergenerational panel of speakers who will represent government, civil society, youth-led organisations and UN entities. Speakers will give different perspectives on the challenges and opportunities in integrating young people’s voices around their SRHR at the Human Rights Council. Davos Style format will be used with each speaker making a 5 minute introduction followed by discussions in the panel and with the audience. No power point presentations or formal speeches will be used, to foster an open debate and lively interaction.

15:00 Welcome and introduction: Malayah Harper, General Secretary, World YWCA

Moderator: H.E. Ambassador Yvette Stevens, Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the UN, Geneva

15:05 Key remarks

• SRHR agenda at HRC35. H.E. Ambassador Reinout Vos, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations in Geneva (5mins)

15:10 Discussions

15:10 The importance of advancing young people’s access to evidence-based information on sexual and reproductive health and rights – H.E. Ambassador Carsten Staur, Permanent Representative of Denmark (5mins)

15:25 Lived realities of young people on issues of Sexual and reproductive health and rights (Three Youth – DRC (JS3), Colombia, Fiji (15 mins)

15:30 Opportunities to include youth voices at the HRC - Veronica Birga, Chief, Women’s Human Rights and Gender Section, OHCHR (5mins)

15:35 Reaction to the young people presentation

○ A member state – H.E. SE Aya Thiam-Diallo, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Mali (3 mins)

○ UN Agency – Monica Pinto Ferro, Executive Director of the UNFPA Office in Geneva (3 mins)

○ Civil Society – Anne-Sophie Lois, UN Representative, Plan International United Nations Office in Geneva (3 mins)
15:45  General discussion (20 mins)

Youth Outcome document presentation
16:05  Presentation of the outcome document of the pre-HRC Youth Forum through spoken word – young woman poet/poets (10 mins)

16:15  Handing over of the outcome document to HE. Mr. Ambassador John, Paton Quinn, Permanent Representation of Australia to the UN (5 mins)

   All PRs in the room will be asked to stand up and receive the declaration

16:20  Wrap up and closing