

My BODY, MY RIGHTS, OUR FREEDOM: CONNECTING SEXUAL AND  
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS AND LGBTQI MOVEMENTS

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>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Hello, everyone. Welcome. We'll start in a few seconds.

Well, hello and and welcome to all viewers of this session. My name is Sofía Jiménez Poiré, I use she/her pronouns and I am a lesbian feminist from Mexico City. I am here today as part of SheDecides, which is a global movement driving change for bodily autonomy for women and girls.

More specifically, I am part of the SheDecides 25x25 Generation of Equality, which is a group of young activists from all over the world born in 1995 and who are working to uphold the Beijing Platform for Action; actually, joining us later today will be my colleague Saidy Brown from South Africa. I am also a program coordinator at the Mexican NGO Balance, where we focus on sexual and reproductive justice for women and youth, and in my case, especially for sapphic women, which is the term we use for women who are attracted to other women, whether we refer to ourselves as lesbian, bisexual, gay, queer, etc.

It is my great pleasure to be the host of this conversation today, which is organized by the Office of the

Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, the Office of the Independent Expert of sexual orientation and gender identity, ILGA World, the Global Queer Youth Network and SheDecides.

For the next hour and a half, we will be inviting different speakers to consider how the sexual and reproductive health and rights and LGBTIQ movements can join efforts around shared purpose and collaborate more effectively in the decade ahead.

Before we get started, a bit of housekeeping. We have simultaneous translation to French, and Spanish. You can choose your preferred language by following the instructions on the chat.

If you face any technical issues during the event, the Q&A section is open and we should be able to help you there. For safeguarding reasons, all participants except for the speakers will have their cameras and audio options off.

To start off this session, we are happy to have the new Executive Director to ILGA World, Doctor Julia Ehrt, sharing her opening remarks to this session.

>> JULIA EHRT: Thank you, Sofia. Thank you to the organizers for inviting me today. It is a privilege to speak to you and deliver some opening remarks. This goes along with the efforts to increase our work in regard to LGBTQI youth and deliver for our younger individuals in our community and the future of the movement.

This sits well with the whole range of activities we're doing which will in a certain way culminate in our world conference next year in May which will be the first world conference -- first world conference post-COVID and maybe more importantly, the first world conference that's going to focus on the theme on youth issues.

Therefore, it is a privilege, a pleasure to be speaking here today.

The outline of this meeting today, it takes reference to the UNFPA publication my body is my own and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate UNFPA. I think this report is brilliant, it is bold, it delivers and elevates an important issue, it is intersectional, trans inclusive, LGBTQI and talks positively on sex work, when I read it the first time I couldn't believe that they're putting their foot down in that way on that topic. Of course, the Rapporteur takes departure in analyzing to what extent married women can exercise their right of free autonomy free of coercion and restriction.

And the 57 states, and the results, they're shocking.

I won't go in the details of the results. I want to say maybe the one result I thought was particularly telling is the fact that UNFPA identified three indicators and those indicators like, like, measure the right to bodily autonomy. What you would expect is that the three indicator are collated and one gets better, the other get better too. That's not the case. They're negatively correlated. One indicator, access to contraception is better, the right of women, the possibility of women to say no to sex gets worse. What does that tell us? It tells us that the decisions on women's bodies are not taken by women because otherwise -- and it as well tells us there seems to be no general trend in the 15 general positives in the states. I thought it was -- I thought it is shocking and counter intuitive. I would not have expected it that way.

Why am I telling you this? Otherwise, what does that have to do with LGBTQI people, as well as young people? I couldn't express better than the Rapporteur said themselves, they say the issue of bodily autonomy relates to a range of other issues, including abortion, age of consent, sex work, and it is a concern for other groups too, such as unmarried Women and Girls, LGBTQI communities, so the topic of body autonomy unites movements and brings us to one table. I don't think you have to read and understand in order to understand the restriction of agency over our own bodies is a very, very powerful tool in order to control us and our communities.

I do believe it gets -- in a certain way, it is more fundamental than that.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights says all human beings are born free and equal in dignity rights as we all know. I would say that there is no life and dignity impossible without the autonomy of our own bodies.

You know, our own bodies, it is the first thing that we are granted when we come into this life.

Therefore, without autonomy of body, there is no dignity. Therefore, bodily autonomy is -- it sits at the right at the centre of Human Rights and that's the issue around bodily autonomy bringing not only the LGBTQI movement but many other, feminist, women movement, others to one joint, common table. Therefore, I think the topic of this event today couldn't be chosen better.

In fact, when you think of it, so many of The Rights that LGBTQI people get denied, so many of The Rights that our movements have been fighting for for decades at times several decades, possibly even centuries, very, very often we have a rather direct relation to the question of bodily

autonomy, be it the question around consensual same-sex activity among adults, be it the rights to comprehensive sex education, be it the right to self-determination of one's own gender identity or it the right to have unchanged or at least unharmed sex characteristics.

All of those fundamental areas that our movements plow through have a very direct relation to bodily autonomy and the right to decide our own bodies. And at the same time, it is a very old, very core feminist principle to have agency -- in this case of women of their own bodies and brings us together to one table. That's why I think it is both strong and timely to discuss. At the end of the day with all the anti trans and anti gender movements that are mushrooming around the world, our right to our bodies is the notion that can unite us against those who want to deny those rights.

Therefore, I look very much forward to both -- well, seeing the video after I spoke, I heard, and then to listening to my colleagues speaking and unpacking that issue that I could only touch, you know, in a very short type of manner and in further detail throughout this event. Thank you.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you very much for the brilliant remarks. I agree with everything you said, bodily autonomy could be the core of everything that unites our movement despite the discourses saying that they're not going together or that they don't -- that they're not compatible. This is fantastic. Thank you for this, for these remarks.

So, yes. We'll start our

First segment is called "Implementation of the Nairobi Summit's commitments: the future of SRHR" and we will have a panel with two members of the ICPD25 Commission, to reflect on the findings of their progress report, launched this week.

Before we start, we will have an introductory video launched by the ICPD25 Follow-up Secretariat at UNFPA, regarding this report.

(video playing with captions).

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you for broadcasting that video. Yes, there has been some progress noted but also, yes, looking back at these -- at how the pandemic hit us, how it has cut funding for us, the service, and also, yes, people having access to their sexual, reproductive rights and health is important to highlight.

We'll be discussing that just now.

It has been highlighted at the Nairobi Summit on

ICPD25, that sexual and reproductive health rights, including continued action on HIV/AIDS, are a core part of the Sustainable Development Goals, with dedicated action by 2030. Young people in particular can face multiple, intersecting obstacles to sexual and reproductive health information and services related to age as well as disabilities, gender diversity, sexual orientation and ethnicity, among others.

To speak about how we have been progressing on the access to SRHR, we will now have two amazing speakers. I'll ask them to please briefly introduce themselves, before we move on to the conversation.

Please.

>> SASKIA SCHELLEKEN: Greetings to all, it is a pleasure to join you today. Thank you to the office, the U.N. independent expert and ILGA World and Global Queer Network and SheDecides for inviting me to this event. I'm Saskia Chelleken and global coordinator of the ICPD25 follow-up at UNFPA, the U.N. population fund. In this role I lead the Secretariat that supports the high-level Commission on the Nairobi summit on the ICPD25 follow-up. I'm in the the commissioner, I'm the lead from the Secretariat to clarify that role.

In this role, beyond serving the high-level Commission, I also lead the coordination internally in UNFPA in terms of our engagement with stakeholders in the follow-up on their voluntary Nairobi commitments. I have work in the U.N. system for two decades now and maybe for full disclosure here as well to let you know, up until 2019 I was special advisor to the Secretary-General Envoy on Youth and returned to UNFPA following the Nairobi summit. I'm looking forward to the event today, it is timely as has mentioned by Julia Ehrst, more so also because we're continuing to mark the second anniversary of the Nairobi Summit, and just last week saw the launch of the high-level Commission first ever report, no exceptions, no exclusions, realizing sexual reproductive health, rights and justice for all which very nicely followed on to the UNFPA State of world population report that Julia highlighted which focused on bodily autonomy this year, my body is my own. Maybe just to mention very briefly before we start that I'm also extremely delighted to be part of this discussion together with my colleague Alvaro Bermejo, a commissioner on the high-level Commission and, of course, well-known as the Director General for IPPF and also want to mention that the Youth Envoy of the Secretary-General as well as Martin who is the board member of ILGA and a Chair of the Youth

Steering Group at ILGA are among some of our many distinguished commissioners just to let people know at the outset of this event.

Really looking forward to today's discussion and having the opportunity to highlight a bit more, the content of the Commission's first report that since the launch last week where it was presented by the co-Chairs of the high-level Commission, the President, former President of Tanzania, Her Excellency Michelle, the former governor-general of Canada and the former Secretary-General of the francophonie and presented to the Executive Director and we have seen a huge following of this online event but also people I think that are keenly interested in learning more about the report and as we're digging through it, learning more about its findings and recommendations and it is a great opportunity to engage with you all today to highlight more of this in our discussion today.

Back to you, Sofia.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you for the remarks and introductions. Now, please, Alvaro Bermejo.

>> ALVARO BERMEJO: Thank you, Sofia.

My name is Alvaro Bermejo, I'm the Director General of the international planned parenthood federation, I PPF, a very large global provide of sexual and reproductive health services and a champion of sexual and reproductive rights around the world. I guess I'm here in that capacity, but more as Saskia Chelleken mentioned, as a commissioner on this Commission that was put together after Nairobi to provide follow-up to the 12 global commitments and the over 1300 national commitments that were made there and to make sure that those promises are more than a promise, that they really turn into action as we go forward and they help us to accelerate in achieving the objectives of ICPD.

A great Mr. Chair to be with you all and to represent other commissioners as well as as I can, who Saskia Chelleken had mentioned a couple of them, we had a very, very diverse group and I think that is the power of it and what's allowed us to come up with the report that I think we all feel very proud of.

Thru thank you.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you  
I'll start by asking...

"Could you share about the process of developing the ICPD25 progress report.

Could we start with you, Saskia.

>> SASKIA SCHELLEKEN: Sure. To reflect on the process of developing the report maybe also for the benefit of

maybe this somewhat younger audience and some of whom may not have even been born by the time that ICPD came around, 1995, younger, yourself, Sofia, to mention, this all started of course at groundbreaking international conference on population and development that took place in Cairo in 1994. It was there where 179 governments decided that, you know, that they would drastically change the approach to issues of population and development and that no longer demographic targets would be leading policies around population and development but rather that people's intrinsic rights to decide themselves and freely and responsibly on the number of children they want, you know, when they want to marry, with whom they want to marry, all of these issues that are so core to exercising our agency and our bodily autonomy are to lead, you know, the world forward on a path to Sustainable Development. This was truly groundbreaking at the time, putting Human Rights at the centre and putting people's dignity and rights central to demographic and development targets. This happened more than 25 years ago.

Now, at the Nairobi summit on ICPD25, which was held a quarter of a century later was not just about celebrating that history, but as last week it was mentioned specifically, it is also about making history again once more and also about very much how do we continue to advance the unfinished business that's still there from the I CPD agenda. The Summit coconvened by governments of Denmark and Kenya together with UNFPA was about translating lessons learned of that past into, unique new roadmap going forward into the future and also about bringing that future along with us. Nairobi saw a massive out pouring of support as the video also mentioned, over 8300 participants from all walks of life, governments, Civil Society, the private sector, international NGOs, the U.N. system, also very crucially youth leaders from all across the world. We had over 1200 youth fellowships that were sponsored to attend the conference.

Nairobi reenergized the global movement for sexual, reproductive rights and health, and it was a critical opportunity to assess the achievements and also to identify what were the remaining gaps and to come up with a credible framework that were tracking future progress. As mentioned by Alvaro Bermejo, it is 1300 voluntary commitments presented by governments and other stakeholders and all of this is encapsulated in the Nairobi statement which reflects on 12 core overarching global commitments which was widely endorsed by participants of the Summit. At the

conclusion of the Summit, and really, you know, also, of course, very encouraged by that voluntary coming forward with all of these commitment, the UNFPA Director committed to establishing the high-level Commission helping us to ensure that the implementation of the commitments could be indeed tracked and regularly reported on.

So we came out of Nairobi, and unfortunately the world was hit by COVID-19 and many countries went into lockdowns, but despite all of that, you know, the organization was not deterred and the high-level Commission was inaugurated on Zoom in September of 2020, so last year.

In addition to the two co-Chairs which I have briefly commissioned, the Commission has a range of distinguished individuals from royalty to academia, Civil Society, private sector foundations, parliamentarian, Ministers, and also many youth leaders from across the world and really reflects again the broad participation that we saw happening in Nairobi.

It is an independent Commission, an independent advisory body and individuals that serve on it are either in individual capacities, the Commission is autonomous in that sense from the United Nations or any other parties and as I think is clear for everyone it is mandated to come out on an annual basis on a report on the progress made with the implementation of the 12 core Nairobi commitments that are submitted to UNFPA and obviously as a very public-facing type of report that hopefully will attract a lot of attention and inspire further action.

Maybe a little bit more on the process of the Commission, once it was established, the Commission was very clear to us as the Secretariat that they wanted to have full ownership on the report and that they wanted to be bold and forward looking. They took the path very seriously and over the last year reflected I think thoroughly on the role and also kept forging ahead with making sure as mentioned that Nairobi promises are promises kept.

I would say in terms of the process they were also very methodological how they went about it, you know, we have a number of meetings throughout the year for the full Commission and also there was an approach chosen to set up a subWorking Group around the three 0s, the 0s of 0 preventable maternal death, 0 family planning and 0 sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices which really offered the opportunities for this large group of 27 commissioners to actually come together in smaller groups and to have in-depth discussions and inputs generated from

the discussions then fed into a number of papers which eventually then also helped develop the broader report.

Maybe also to mention that in addition to those three Working Groups there was a Working Group established around the development of the global monitoring framework for the 12 commitments which is presented in the back of the report as an annex, as a traffic light system, it provides an overview of key indicators that were identified that can help the Commission track and the global community really trackhoe each of the commitments is being advanced in the various regions. At the moment the traffic lights look very red and orange, rather concerning meaning that, you know, there is a long way to go this advancing the commitments.

In a way, it also offers a strong, powerful accountability tool that can help advance the Commission in its work and offers a baseline as the Commission, you know, will work on the future reports that will come in the next years.

Interesting about it, the thing maybe just to briefly mention about the monitoring framework, it doesn't just pull on very well established international indicators that we have vastly available in the U.N. for instance for SDG, the Sustainable Development Goals, that we draw from the demographic health surveys and other surveys and also it brings in indicators that perhaps are somewhat more unusual to the U.N. which are for instance indicators around LGBTQI where we very much looked at the work undertaken by others and indicators available for that.

I think maybe just to say with all of the different threads of work, then eventually, the support of a lead order, close coordination, with the Secretariat and the continuous engagement of the commissioners in the review process of the various drafts of the report, we then arrived at the product no exceptions, no exclusions realizing reproductive sexual rights and health justice for all as launched last week. I can stop here. I hope there is still something for Alvaro Bermejo to also reflect on! That I didn't take too much time here. Yeah. It has been a very interesting process. I think as Alvaro Bermejo had said, an inclusive process with a lot of strong engagement from the commissioners throughout the whole year.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you for sharing with us this big picture and the context of the reports. Thank you very much for that.

Alvaro Bermejo, would you like to add anything to that?

>> ALVARO BERMEJO: I think it has been very comprehensive.

The only thing maybe I would add was that the Commission really used its voice to call for listening to other voices in all their diversity. The Working Groups, the one I had -- I had the fortune to co-Chair with Lawrence, the President of Afrian and for east and southern after architectural frameworks from DRC, you know, very clearly the Commission said -- articulated that if they were going to base the report around sexual, reproductive justice, which is the way we have framed it, then we need it to be hearing women, adolescents, youth, people with diverse genders, identities and really all of those that remain furthest from realizing their rights and we need it to be listening and feeding that into the Commission and into the report. The Working Groups helped do that.

The fact that many of us, in our organization, in our day-to-day, we're sort of connected to those voices and listening, we could bring that and channel it to the best you can, of course, it always is imperfect.

All of that.

But that was -- that was a very clear mandate from the Commission, to the individual commissioners, trying to bring that in.

I guess it is now for the reader really to say whether we managed or not.

That was -- that was very much a deliberate effort.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you for sharing that as well.

Also we have already some questions from the audience and that goes with the next question that we had planned which was about if you would like to comment on any surprising findings on the report? Challenges still to overcome? Also it joins the questions from the audience which is someone asks or says recommendations focus on pushing back against degradation of Human Rights and this person wonders what steps can be taken to take up the recommendations seriously tracking The Rights on Human Rights defenders and ensuring their protection. The other question, it is this person fears that Nairobi is being forgotten and is asking what we can do to -- what can we do more to keep the groundbreaking commitments alive and to make commitment makers accountable.

Please, would you like to share on this.

>> ALVARO BERMEJO: Yes. I'll try and respond sort of simultaneously to the surprises and the two questions maybe.

I would say two things surprised me the most. Maybe

the first one, how quickly we came as a Commission to realize the dramatic way in which COVID had exposed what we started calling the fragility of the right of the R in SRHR, how fragile The Rights were for SRHR through the pandemic. Chapter one of the report, it is very much about that.

In that, the Commission decries upfront how the COVID pandemic has in a way demonstrated the ease in which countries set aside hard gained sexual and reproductive rights in favor of other priorities. I'm not talking just to those that are known for resisting gross towards gender equality and have used the pandemic as an excuse to try to roll them back.

The Commission wasn't just talking about Poland or Hungary, we were also talking about those who have in the past been supportive, who we thought were on our side, and whose moral and political failure has been made evidence with the pandemic in eroding services and lost financing, and in diminishing political accountability for sexual, reproductive rights around the world.

The likes of the U.K. governments, and the Commission stresses in the report very strongly that now is not the time to invoke austerity and to disinvest in sexual and reproductive health and rights. That continued and increased investment of rights and development overall, it is backed by longstanding evidence of high returns on these investments. It was maybe the first surprise, how such a diverse Commission could very quickly coalesce around that.

The second issue for me was around what I mentioned at the beginning, how quickly we realized that if you were to respond to the way in which COVID-19 had exacerbated, you know, disparities, abuse, based on gender equality, race, disability, other parameter, the intersecting inequalities and injustices required a global agenda for sexual and reproductive justice that builds as Julia has said on realizing rights and bodily autonomy, by overcoming all of these intersecting barriers. This was needed more than ever after Nairobi.

The report also highlights that an agenda for sexual, reproductive justice requires an inclusive definition of diverse orientations and identity.

Those two things for me were to some extent surprising. We did address the issue that is being picked up by one of our colleagues sort of listening in around the protection of sexual and reproductive health providers as Human Rights defenders and activists, LGBTQI rights as Human Rights defenders and one of the things that the

Commission was very clear, and it is in there in the report it is that need to get much better at documenting the systematic increase in these violations, product of an opposition that's just not better financed than ever, but that is more aggressive and more violent than it has ever been.

That is reflected in the Commission's thinking and in the report as well.

In terms of how to keep the momentum alive, what the Commission sort of will continue doing as per the mandate as mentioned by Saskia Chelleken has mentioned, having a report every year in these discussions dialogues and pushing the accountability framework that was also mentioned by Saskia, the Annex to the report, but we also need -- we need to do more for sure. The proposal in the Commission, it highlights more than 12 countries, more than a Dunola Oladapo countries, that have made good progress in terms of setting up national accountability mechanisms, it also asks that the UPR mechanism and the SDG reviews, annual reporting mechanism, they're utilized also to report against the Nairobi commitments and in that sense, to keep the discussion going and to keep the pressure on those that made commitments.

I will stop there, I know there will be more questions. I'm sure that Saskia can add to this as well.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you very much.

Would you like to comment on these questions, Saskia?

>> SASKIA SCHELLEKEN: Well, I think Alvaro Bermejo has said a lot. Yeah, indeed, you know, I think what's also very clear, very strong coming out of the report is, of course, not addressing these issues, it has detrimental impacts on people's rights and their personal health and also has impacts on social justice overall and the opportunities to achieve the SDB agenda.

The failure to accelerate action undermines the Human Rights and also the opportunities to reduce poverty and other agendas and again, I think again we can really look at the various agendas, how they're so interconnected with each other.

I just wanted to pick up on maybe the issue of accountability for the Nairobi commitments and as mentioned, the report does also highlight, you know, not just only the bad, but also somewhat the good and really trying to, you know, also reflect on where progress has been made and the report in that sense picks up on the national commitment Committee Committees that have been established with governments and other stakeholders at country level to

have a continuous opportunity to come together and reflect on the implementation of the voluntary national commitments, also in the context of the UPR, the universal periodic review at the Human Rights Council, we have seen good traction with the Nairobi commitment, the majority of countries that have since the Nairobi Summit been going through the process of the peer reviews have indeed, you know, been also reviewed on how they have advanced their own Nairobi commitments and, you know, from other country, part of the Human Rights Council, receiving recommendations and we see that in the context of that follow-up they usually adopt the recommendations as well which gives them a four-year period at country level to really, you know, work with the National Human Rights Institutions to make those commitments a reality.

That's a really good accountability mechanism that links the global with the local. We do want to see more in the context of the High-Level Political Forum I would say, and very much in the national voluntary review processes there. Unfortunately there a lot more could still be done.

I wanted to say also maybe more on the side of the positive, the Commission also very much I think looked into where the service -- despite all of the challenges that, of course, apparently are there due to the COVID-19 pandemic did actually make some progress in terms of adopting new, innovative approach, using new technologies, also through telemedicine and other approaches. Actually we have sometimes seen that these innovations help us to reach the populations that sometimes have been left behind.

There are some good things and potential to be further explored around those issues as well.

I think that the report does a good job in terms of highlighting the good and the bad and indeed, you know, be very comprehensive in that sense.

I would just add that on, but generally, obviously, you know, there is a lot of work to be done still, and that many partners around the world and those connecting to the conversation today will continue to walk the talk and talk the walk with us as we continue the March on the Nairobi commitments.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you. To stay on the position active side, yes, any gross that the report shows, I would like to ask you one final question before we close this segment, which is about going back to the LGBTQI youth.

"What does the report show when it comes to progress for This population? Show any progress, challenges.

Alvaro Bermejo, would you like to start.

>> ALVARO BERMEJO: Yes.

There were multiple Nairobi commitments that promised to improve the health and wellbeing of youth and adolescents in general.

The Commission sort of sees, it is that because -- partly because of the COVID pandemic we fear that the next generation in a way, that those that are small kids now that will be adolescents, sort of in 2013, and we're already facing many challenges before the pandemic are slipping backwards.

We had a lot of evidence of that. Some of it I have to say provided by the African Queer Youth Initiative and I would like to give them a shoutout here, which really highlighted set veer impact of the pandemic on young queer people's lives in Africa.

That was the context in which we were looking at the results and progress.

You know, you said you wanted just good news.

Let me tell you a little bit, the three main -- what I see as the three main commitments sort of as they effect LGBTQI youth. Commitment for is access for all adolescents and youth, especially girls to comprehensive and age responsive information and comprehensive, quality, timely services, to be available for free and to make informed decisions and choices about their sexuality and reproductive lives. This commitment when we look at the indicators, at the dashboard created is red and Central, Southern Asia and Africa. It is orange and yellow elsewhere, it is nowhere green. A lot of progress missing there. Commitment 5, was to achieve 0 gender-based violence and harmful practices. Yet, we know that gender-based violence became known as the shadow pandemic. Not surprisingly, we find a mix of yellows and oranges and again no greens, 0 greens.

The commitment 9, it is the one furthest behind of all 12 commitments. It only has orange and red across all regions. This is the commitment to building peaceful, just, inclusive societies where no one is left behind, where all are able to shape their own destiny and contribute to the prosperity of their societies.

I would say what the report show, honestly, it is the terrible impact on queer adolescents experiencing double marginalization in pursuit of sexual and reproductive health services as adolescents, as queer. I think in reflecting we need to start from there, from acknowledging -- I would say as an individual, also as IPPF, the organization I lead, that we have to do better

than we have done since Nairobi.

I say this as the starting work.

At the same time, we have tried in the Commission to point to positive developments and you can see many examples of brilliant service, some of them within IPPF, bridging schools and clinics, self-managed care, inclusive, in and out of school comprehensive sexual reproductive education with digital technology, impactful LGBTQI advocacy. There is enough there not to despair but I think we need to understand that we are falling very, very short. That is, I'm afraid, the reality and why we need to maintain the activism, the strong and make sure that this young generation that is leading a lot of the LGBTQI advocacy, at least the one I encounter as Director of IPPF, the youth-led LGBTQI organizations, they lead the charge and that we see ourselves as commissioners or as established SRHR organizations supporting that and providing platforms and support. That's where I see us going in the next few years.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you.

We're just a couple of minutes over the time established for this segment, Saskia, would you like to share comments to chose this section?

>> SASKIA SCHELLEKEN: I will be brief. I think that Alvaro Bermejo covered a lot of this and indeed there are a number of commitments amongst the 12 core overarching commitments in the Nairobi statement that are particularly linked to experiences and lives of young people and specifically mentioned young people as part of their commitment. I think overall, all of the commitments in one way or another are really critical for young people and are relevant for their lives. There is one commitment specifically around also young people's meaningful engagement and involvement in any decisions that effect our live, really aligned with the Nairobi statement overall and ICPD25 and the 5 core commitments, we have to include and engage younger people in all of their diversity in any decisions effecting their live, no exception, no exclusions.

I think this is really a good start in a way -- not a start obviously, we have worked for a long time together -- but to ensure we bring the various agendas and movements together. I think as was also mentioned by Julia, in some way now by Alvaro Bermejo again, that we see the convergences of justice movements all across its SRHR and LGBTQI. You won't get SRHR without LGBTQI issues being addressed. You won't achieve gender justice without paying

attention and ensuring that sexual reproductive rights and justice are achieved. Climate justice is not going to happen without gender justice as we just saw a week ago in Glasgow and I think it was more predominantly there on the agenda than it ever has been before. I think all of these -- you know, these movements and agendas, they're becoming more and more crystallized and clear that we need each other and we need to really join forces there around them, really to also work with the Commission and work around this report and already looking forward to the work going forward and indeed very much hoping that we will have plenty of opportunities for joining up forces with all key partners involved in today's events and beyond. Especially bringing in those voices of the younger generations in all their diversity, they're the ones that need to, you know, own the ICPD agenda even if maybe this happened before you were born, the issues are still very much there and are critical to everyone's lives and everyone's wellbeing. Maybe I could just stop there, I would be very happy to share with you in the chat the links for the report, also the link to the launch event last week for those that haven't had a chance yet to see it.

The report, maybe just a very practical note is available in French and English, and then also executive summaries in Arabic, English, French, Russian, and so for anyone interested please don't hesitate also to reach out to us at UNFPA and ICPD25 Secretariat and again thank you for having us -- for having me.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Would you like to share some closing words, Alvaro Bermejo snap.

>> ALVARO BERMEJO: No. I know we're out of time. I think HIV a chance to really say what I want to say.

Thank you. I really think that we need to work together much more in all spaces, including humanitarian spaces where, again, SRHR and LGBTQI issues are more dramatic than ever and that the two movements have a lot to add to each other and to contribute to each other accepting sort of -- I still think the leadership of the young queer-led organizations, it is something that we need more of within the SRHR space and we very much welcome all of you that have put this event together.

Thank you so much.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you for sharing such brilliant comments and for sharing all of these results of the report.

I absolutely agree that actually all of the LGBTQI movements can be earmarked within the SRHR movements, it is

just that usually within the SRHR movement we don't usually have this perspective of people who are other than heterosexual and cis, yes, very much they can be mashed together., again, I thank you very much for sharing all of this with us.

We'll now move to the second segment, named my body, my rights, our freedom, LGBTQI and SRHR youth in action. We'll talk to young activists working on the intersection between the LGBTIQ and SRHR movements..

I will have the different panelists introduce themselves. I'll start with Saidy Brown if you're over here.

Are you there? I can see you.

>> SAIDY BROWN: Can you hear me?

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Go ahead.

>> SAIDY BROWN: Hello, everyone. My name is Saidy Brown. I am a leader based in South Africa.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you.

I would now like Georgia to introduce herself, please.

>> GEORGIA ANDREWS: Hello, everyone. My name is Georgia Andrews. My pronouns are she/her, I'm an activist based in New Zealand, just a bit of background about myself, I have been involved in intersex advocacy on a global level for the past seven years, a highlight of my intersex journey included partnership projects I have supported following United Nations recommendations to the New Zealand government so I have been engaged in non-government organization and government conversations as a sex out person in New Zealand within the youth space.

I am really honored to be here today, it is an absolute pleasure to be sitting alongside my colleagues Saidy Brown and M, a phenomenal group of people. This is forgotten, conversations around sexual and reproductive health rights, I feel as an intersex lesbian women there are so many intersections which I'm excited to share today. Thank you.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you, Georgia.

Finally, Michael.

>> MICHAEL CHIUNDA:

Thank you. My name is Michael Chiunda. I am an activist in Stockholm. I'm currently working with a chapter of a bigger national queer organization where we have experience with an interoperabilitier serksal feminist queer organization globally and we have 150 members and chapters throughout the world and some of my experiences as well in SRHR and activism within southern Africa and globally.

Thank you.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you, Michael.

Thank you for introducing yourselves.

It is a pleasure to speak with you today.

So if that's okay with you. I would like to start directly with the conversation, we have a lot to discuss over our half hour.

First of all, first we have already talked in the first segment about the impact of the pandemics.

We would like to hear from you what do you think, rather, how do you think that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the barriers on LGBTQI youth in our access to SRHR around the world? I would like to start with Saidy Brown if that's okay with you.

>> SAIDY BROWN: Sofia, could you please repeat the question?

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Yes. Sorry.

How do you think that the pandemic has increased the barriers for LGBTQI youth and our access to SRHR?

>> SAIDY BROWN: Okay.

I do think the COVID pandemic has increased the barriers that were already in place for queer people who are based over the world. We are people who are subject to usually the bottom of the barrel when it comes to accessing services and when it comes to being prior tied as young people that are queer and and what we saw with the whole pandemic happened, it was that there was a lot of exclusion of queer young people. I'm a queer young person myself, and what happened, is that I even started really speaking more openly about the exclusion of queer young people living with HIV as a queer person living with HIV and how queer women are constantly being erased and removed from conversations about HIV.

I got to realize that for a lot of the times we got quite excluded and kind of forgotten from the priorities where the pandemic was concerned.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you, Saidy.

>> What would you add to this.

>> GEORGIA ANDREWS: I agree with Saidy. The COVID pandemic has highlighted the limited support that our LGBTQI communities have and sexual and reproductive health right spaces for a number of the global intersex friends there have been massive impacts from COVID starting with unemployment, individuals have not been able to pay rent and they're then homeless and not able afford support for life preserving intervention, whether that's medication, access to medical care or surgical care that is life

preserving. That is particularly concerning, given that our governments have -- voices have been raised in this space by youth communities around how challenging it is for intersex people to gain access to health rights that they need yet governments are now using the excuse in some countries of COVID as a delay or a barrier to a continuing conversation and dialogue with young people.

I think for intersex people, hormone replacement therapy is a key part to some people's healthcare regimes and in order to guarantee the positive sexual and reproductive health outcomes for some individuals, hormone access is needed. COVID has close factories globally and a lot of people are without medications which is particularly concerning in and putting sexual and reproductive health at risk.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you. I think it is very important that you highlight the challenges that intersex people face. It is usually not the most visible part of the LGBTQI population in general.

It is very valuable that we can share about all of this. Michael, would you like to add anything to this question?

>> MICHAEL CHIUNDA: Yeah. So I have a unique experience, during COVID I was able to travel in between two very distinct continents to say the least. I was in part of southern Africa in the beginning of 2019 and in the middle of 2019 I was now in Sweden and I have experienced different communities talking about, for example, in Zimbabwe, abortion laws, they're completely different. We have around 614 deaths per 10,000 when it comes to maternal mortality rate, it is one of the highest in the world according to the U.N. and also when it comes to I think similar to Georgia's experience around hormonal therapy that's non-existent in Zimbabwe. I guess during the pandemic it only made it worse, the people's access.

A general reality is the funding is towards MSM, so that's males who have sex with males and trans persons. Anyone else whose outside of the -- of part that have group has not access to these rates. It is pretty different from Sweden and Stockholm, it is not -- I mean, access is there, but I guess when it comes to the actual conversation between different ethnicities and people who have different privileges, that's when you see the impact of COVID-19 and who has access to a kind of information and what language and what community you come from. I guess I'll just say that.

Thank you.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you, Michael.

It is one of the new highlights of how politics that may be aimed towards, you know, like the whole LGBTQI population, for example, may prioritize certain segments as mentioned, of what would correspond to gay men or just men who have sex with other men and so I think it is important to, yes, highlight how it is not a homogenous population and we have different needs within it. Thank you for sharing that.

I would now like to ask you what, are some examples of initiatives that have been focusing on LGBTQI youth and their sexual and reproductive rights. Maybe you have certain examples of good practices in the countries or regions that you would like to talk about.

Would you like to start, Saidy.

>> SAIDY BROWN: Yes.

So in the previous, I have been a part of SheDecides. And I have been -- we have been given the platform to pretty much advocate for the things that really mattered to us.

We have -- because we -- we are such huge advocates of our rights to bodily autonomy, it has been quite important for us to also intersect our own personal beliefs, our own personal things that we advocate or believe into bodily autonomy. This is pretty much how I got to intersex my -- to intersect my advocacy in as queer young person living with HIV. That's been a great example that I could mention.

There are other things, there are a few NGOs in my country where they have different programme, one that comes to mind, it is this amazing campaign that is meant for men who have sex with other men and pretty much they go out into the communities, seek those men, test them for HIV, initiate them on treatment and make sure that they retain them on treatment for HIV. That has also been quite phenomenal for me to see and to just look at -- I love how it has been important that we intersect other issues that queer young people go through beyond them just being queer people.

Thank you.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you, Saidy.

Georgia, would you like to share anything?

>> GEORGIA ANDREWS: Since 2017 I have been involved in government conversations in regards to enter sex health rights, serving on the community of The Rights of the child and U.N. Committee against torture, acknowledged that there has been a lack of focus to bodily autonomy and

self-determination rights for underaged people in New Zealand. The New Zealand government along with the pediatric Society of New Zealand and the New Zealand Human Rights Commission established an intersex roundtable group to bring in clinicians, community members and intersex allies to navigate pathways forward for enhancing the levels of care and support in those areas.

A barrier that was identified was that there were only two intersex people invited in the space and I was the only youth representative in a group speaking on behalf of all intersex youth in the country.

That was a significant challenge. The progress that point forward was following the roundtable conversations, New Zealand government alongside the pediatric Society of New Zealand funded a two-year programme to meet to establish a Terms of Reference for young people. The framing was child and youth, so from 0 years to 18 years old. Limitations within that space where clinicians felt it was not enough time available to discuss youth issues, so youth issues were completely taken off the table. Although the U.N. recommendations stated we needed youth issues to be spoken about and addressed, they were effectively forgotten over the course of the two years and positive new, on the 26th of October, intersex, 2021 the New Zealand government acknowledged there is a long way to go still in supporting The Rights and needs of intersex people, particularly focusing on an all life care model, looking at the impacts, the sexual, reproductive health, when intervention, hormonal, surgical are undertaken against young people. We must focus as a country on what those impacts are for those people as they become older.

For the statistics we see for poor levels of reproductive health, it is a result of medical intervention, particularly concerning, alongside a failure to acknowledge the psychosocial health outcomes and implications that is the alongside the interventions..

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you.

Michael, would you like to share?

>> MICHAEL CHIUNDA: Yeah. Sure.

2019, around January, February, I was part of a bigger national conversation in Zimbabwe around queer issues and their bodies and in that regard, because most of the members and people were having discussions, they happened to be queer, but also this was at the ground level, which is similar to most of the NGOs. I mentioned the MSM programmes, those programmes, on the ground level, therefore queer people, that's a positive in terms of the

initiative, but when it -- when you look at the structure of these organizations, that are spearheading the programmes, it is generally for folks that are not queer and that creates more of a gap in the actual positive nature of the programme.

Here in Sweden, I have been part of -- like I mentioned -- I'm here in Stockholm and I guess one of the major highlights that I have experienced, it is how we have been able to create safe spaces especially art and mental health because I work with refugees mainly.

Those are some initiative there is and in Zimbabwe they're working with an organization, a collective, and it is mainly for social events and helping each other understand some of their rights and there are legal and more practical activities that they also host which is a very interesting and progressive way, especially considering political State of Zimbabwe right now.

Thank you.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you, Michael.

You have talked about this a bit.

I think -- well, you mentioned that governments are lagging behind their commitments and, yes, just ensuring that sexual and reproductive health and rights are guaranteed for our population. There is also the challenge that maybe there are some governments that are progressive and at least in this discourse and they can commit to the subjects and the problematics or the populations but in some other countries we see that there are challenges to make governments talk about this and convening themselves to these causes.

I would like to ask you if from within Civil Society and young activist movements, have you noticed any strategies that are aimed towards governments so that they can indeed -- yes, they're there to talk about this and engage themselves in all of this. Again, we can start with Saisy and then Georgia and Michael.

>> SAIDY BROWN: Where the government is concerned in South Africa, it really hasn't been any efforts that have been put in place to kind of make sure that queer people get a life that they deserve in the sense that they usually are those periods where queer young people matter and are subject to so much hate and constantly we have been -- we have had to virtually fight and be like why are we not noticed. People are being murdered and no one is saying anything about it. Where the government is concerned, I wouldn't really say that there's much that's being done.

I would say that on the Civil Society, in South

Africa, different organizations, really, according to me, really they put in the to work make sure that they create safe spaces for young people who are queer and to just make sure that we have a sense of community because it really gets difficult. One thing that we shouldn't even get accustomed to, it is related to queer people is trans phobia, queer phobia, other phobias that you literally get subject to just by virtue of you being a queer adolescent. It is difficult to kind of constantly have to fight, constantly have to exist in a world where everyone else is existing and you also have to justify why your existence is important. You have a right just like somebody else.

Honestly, I don't think much has been done where the government is concerned. We can say that we do try as queer people in South Africa and the Civil Society and to organizations to make sure that we take it upon ourselves to create a method that we can do -- we don't really have the power that the government does have, but to have a right to implement the spaces that we would like to see being implemented by our government.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you. What you just said resonated a lot with me n Latin America we have high-levels of violence against -- high-levels of violence in general, also against queer people and women. It is -- there is a difference that for example at least the Mexican government is committed to ending this sort of hate crimes and discrimination. However, despite having a government that's rather grocer, at least in this course, we can see that change in reality, where people are still being murdered and abused and everything. Yes. Thank you for sharing that.

What about you?

>> GEORGIA ANDREWS: We're in a unique position, we have the highest representation of queer identified members of parliament and the world. There is a broad discussion of LGBTQI rights and saying that to date there is no formal legal protections specifically supporting intersexed people and communities within -- there are few of thaws are out in New Zealand, we have felt that we need to advocate for ourselves and show best practice procedures for government, examples of this include walking into medical schools and University around the country and partnering with lecturers to establish lecture programmes and course assessment that covers the Rights of intersex people and doesn't leave intersex narratives forgotten. Particularly when working with the young clinicians, walking to a medical space, we're often they don't know who intersexed people are or

how to support them. If we don't break the barriers at that point in education and training, how will we see systematic change across the country. We're feeding this information back to government, telling them about the impacts that this conversation is having, not only on intersex health outcomes but also on the confidence our clinicians have to step forward and to support more positive conversations.

Also mainstream media is huge. The New Zealand society is small and we are proud of the way in which we can support Human Rights. For young activists to go to media, whether that's social media, newspaper, TV, to speak up about our rights, we are heard. New Zealand wants to be seen as a country that stands above the rest.

My final comment on this space, it is we need to also reflect on what other countries are doing, possibly different from us. I have been partnering with my friend Australian based, a founder, editor of youth and looking at global intersex issues. We are launching our youth publication on December 2nd and it highlights stories from intersex young people all around the world and it is translated into individual's national languages as well as English and we're using that as a story to share with communities around how we can celebrate and support narratives that are often not talked about and excitingly we have some young people who have contributed stories about sexual, reproductive rights and health access.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you, Georgia.

Michael.

>> MICHAEL CHIUNDA: So in Zimbabwe, the government before 2017 was very brutal when it came to sexualities and different sexualities in the community. Right now the legislature is a little bit silent so it is open to interpretation by if it is a police officer that you meet or if there's someone on street but there is a huge culture of sexual harassment, street sexual harassment, sexual assault and so legally they claim you might have protection but, you know, in every day it is a whole completely different story and there has been some positives when it comes to the Civil Societies because like I mentioned they are NGO, collectives of people who are coming together in solidarity and deciding to push for a specific movement.

I think for one major attractive positive thing is ownership of, like I mentioned, there's a lot of sexual harassment, ownership of some of these words, some of these meeting places and at the brink of their minds, always being safe but there is solidarity and ownership and

because of the groups, there's also a support from legal practitioners, independent legal practitioners so I feel in that way there is a whole lot of movement since 2017 but in relation to most countries around us, most countries around Zimbabwe, we're still way back. Yeah. Yeah.

Thank you.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you, Michael.

We actually got a comment from the audience: I think the research community has a role to play. There is a huge need in providing more information and data about LGBTQI people. Some government officials believe that these people do not exist in certain context. They agree, I think at least in Mexico, we are always pushing to get more data and to have our populations visualized within population census, in general, making more, yes, just general more research. It is very important to have that in order to push for public policies that can address our needs. Yes. Absolutely.

Also if we could focus on actions that we could further for the future so that we can talk about this in the last 10 minutes of the conversation.

Let me just start by saying, remarking that the U.N. Youth Strategy has as one of the priorities to leverage the U.N. advocacy and the programmatic capacities to extend young people's access to youth friendly, sexual and reproductive comprehensive services and computation and this is all useful for this cause but also yes, because looking at the future, what actions still need to be taken to really guarantee young people's access to SRHR all over the world. If you would like, we can start backwards maybe with Michael and then Georgia and then Saidy.

>> MICHAEL CHIUNDA: Great.

The most important thing is education. Especially in the context of Zimbabwe. We have a vibrant youth, that's the thing. We have a vibrant youth and young people, the age of 25, they're open-minded, and if there is more education around that, what that means to be in your sexuality, then I feel the issue around The Rights and your health is the next step.

I suppose more information that's directed towards that demographic, that's relevant for them, and I think to focus more on those communities, for example in Zimbabwe, rather than going to traditional schools, you go to the places where they hang out and where they're most likely going to listen to -- in my experience, it is usually very formal in how this information is, you know, given to this demographic and sometimes it is very difficult for someone

to listen when in schools as opposed to when they're just in a hangout spot. Working with an age group, presenting a very relevant, fun, but still education.

Thank you.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: I love that. Thank you, Michael. Georgia.

>> GEORGIA ANDREWS: I echo Michael, education is fundamental. I think that most problematic areas for intersex individuals being able to access sexual and reproductive health support is that clinicians so often globally tell intersex people went diagnosed to never tell anyone that they're intersexed, that their body is shameful, that they're different, that they're othered, and that they should keep the narrative a secret. If we want young people to feel comfort to access healthcare, sexual and reproductive health access, we must have conversations from a point of diagnosis where young people feel they can celebrate who they are. We're not seeing a change in the level of access to health services, people are too scared to actually step up saying I feel comfortable saying that, for example, an intersex person, I want to start a family, I need support with my reproductive health. If my clinician told me when I'm 8 years old, 10 years old, 16, that my body is shameful, I'm not going to access that. The barrier alongside that because people are not accessing the services, we don't have a recourse to show the numbers of people in our population. What's the balance of how do we lift up our young people so that they feel proud of who they are, they know they're entitled to access support but we have the data to support the funding to establish necessary services.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you, Georgia.

Yes, it is important to feel, yes, to recognize the diversity and to be able to, yes, break stigma around all sorts of -- everything and everyone that goes outside of the norm.

Thank you.

>> SAIDY BROWN: It is important to echo everything that my colleagues have been saying.

It is important to feel represented and included, and the spaces in the conversations, literally, we see this all the time -- say this -- nothing should be done for us without us in the spaces. It is important that we keep on being asked and consulted about the things that could matter to us and what we think is relevant.

Let me think what could help us in creating a better life for us.

I'm all for inclusivity and it is important to just be looking at young people and just seeing their -- seeing them for them -- for the holistic, the human beings that we are. We literally have so much more to offer, we have so many great ideas that we have to offer.

It is important that we just keep giving these opportunities and these spaces to be able to properly articulate what exactly we want with the access to the SRHR services in healthcare facilities, I would say that it is important that we have queer friendly services, but again, I would also like to say that it is quite -- it is really important that we also have queer inclusive services within that already existing healthcare systems.

Also let's try not to isolate us from the general public, let us integrate the queer inclusive services into the already existing facilities so that we can feel like we're part of the community. We are. Our existence, it is -- we're human beings and we are deserving to be existing in the same spaces as everyone else.

I would really like to see queer young people being able to properly address themselves, you know, Georgia, the difficulty of speaking, I'm queer and living with HIV and I don't know how to properly tell healthcare workers that I'm trying to figure out weighs to have safe sex with my partner. Those are other things that we should be going through as young people. These things should be there, they should be general knowledge, it shouldn't be a thing or a difficult conversation that we have to go through.

It is important that we keep on saying we care and we demand and we deserve to be here.

Thank you.

>> SOFIA JIMENEZ: Thank you, Saidy, that was brilliant.

Yes.

I think we will now be closing this conversation. But I would like to highlight that what you all said, you highlighted two things, access to information and education and contemplates our diversity and that, yes, it acknowledging us and our rights and in that sense we create a community that's more welcoming and, yes, that's more safe for us to live within on one end.

On the other one, well, there is the question about service, right.

Again, this could derive -- if we have a general society that is aware of LGBTQI needs and rights and all of these things, we would think that health services, especially sexual and reproductive ones are aware of our

needs and can treat news a manner that's safe and respectful for all of us. In that sense, not only services like in the way that we have been treated within health centres or anything like that, but also within the products we received, as you said, when it comes to safe sex, can we get, you know, latex barriers for people with vulvas to use, we always have condoms, you know, external condoms, can we have access to other barriers, other things in a more -- they are usually more expensive and less likely to be found in pharmacies and stuff like that. Yes.

Having a more integral and integrated view and perspective in general society about our needs as LGBTQI youth is very important.

Thank you very much for sharing your very perspectives from each of the corners of the world.

We will now be closing the session. Thank you, everyone, that's viewing this.

Thank you all for joining us on this session of the Queer Youth Dialogues, remember this is a year-long campaign, so we hope you continue to join us on the next sessions, and that together we can continue to build a stronger global youth movement for LGBTQI human rights, with more resources, support and power.

Please follow our social media channels for more information. If you are a young person, sign up to to the Queer Youth Network's mailing list via the website. We are sharing the link in the chat just now..

Again, thank you, Georgia, Saïdy, Michael, for this conversation.

It was a pleasure speaking to you.