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NGO Oral Statement

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Thank you Mr. President,

The Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) and Action Canada for Population and Development make this statement in collaboration with Right Here Right Now Bangladesh and Sexual Rights Initiative.

Young people constitute one fifth of Bangladesh's population and while the country has made great strides in terms of ensuring reproductive health care services for women, very little attention has been paid to the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people. They lack access to comprehensive information about sexual and reproductive health issues and to quality youth friendly services. The coverage of service providers remains limited in urban slums and rural areas.¹ Furthermore, persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities continue to face discrimination, stigma, and violence.²

During its 3rd UPR, Bangladesh received recommendations on elimination of all forms of discrimination and abuse on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation; decriminalization of homosexuality; and enabling environment for sexual and reproductive health of women and girls. It is very concerning that Bangladesh has failed to respond positively to many of these recommendations, citing "cultural codes". This response contradicts Bangladesh's international human rights commitments. It also reinforces the deep rooted patriarchal notions that control women and girls' bodies, reducing their access to sexual and reproductive health services. Further, it directly endangers young people and women's lives by withholding essential information and services with regard to their bodies.

We urge Bangladesh to build on the positive steps taken in past years to uphold the sexual and reproductive rights of young people and women. We call on Bangladesh to renew its political commitment and investment in gender equality, universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and comprehensive sexuality education for all. And in doing so, to truly fulfill Bangladesh's international commitments with regards to human rights and to enable young people and women to exercise their fundamental bodily rights.

Thank you.

¹ http://evidenceproject.popcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Bangladesh-ASRH-Report_January-2017.pdf

² https://www.wewillspeakout.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/GBV-Study-report_Final-FHI_PNG-and-Bangladesh.pdf