



STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

in follow-up to the hearing organized by the
Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs and International Development of the House of Commons of Canada,
on March 9, 2023
on the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women Globally

Whenever a woman is denied the power to make her own decisions about whether, when or how often to become pregnant, her internationally recognized human rights are violated. This is not just the view of UNFPA, the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. It is the position of the 179 governments that adopted the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which recognizes the right of all people to decide freely the number, spacing and timing of their children and their right to make decisions free of discrimination, coercion and violence. UNFPA uses every occasion and opportunity to promote those rights and push for adherence to the ICPD principles; continues to urge all Member States to fulfill the reproductive rights of women and young people; and advocates for universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights both through its normative and its programmatic work on the ground in more than 150 countries.

As approved by its Executive Board, UNFPA has consistently worked in China and indeed in all countries to advocate for reproductive health programmes and policies fully aligned with the ICPD, which promotes only volunteerism and human rights. UNFPA is firmly on the record in opposition to any birth limitation policies - including China's former "one-child" policy that restricts the ability of an individual or couple to make their own reproductive decisions. Indeed, United Nations Member States have long described UNFPA's work in China as a force for good.

UNFPA has consistently advocated for and promoted fulfillment of the basic right of all couples and individuals in China and globally to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children. UNFPA also has consistently advocated for the right to the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health, and has promoted access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including voluntary and rights-based family planning in China and globally. UNFPA does not support or promote abortion as a method of family planning in China or anywhere, in line with paragraph 8.25 of the ICPD Programme of Action. It accords the highest priority and support to voluntary family planning to prevent unintended pregnancies so as to eliminate recourse to abortion. UNFPA opposes any form of coercive sexual and reproductive health policies or programmes including but not limited to forced abortion and forced sterilization in line with the ICPD Programme of Action.

UNFPA's main role in China is to provide advice to the Government – through advocacy, policy dialogue, technical assistance, research and bringing evidence of what works, particularly in relation to rights-based and gender responsive approaches and bring them in line with the ICPD Programme of Action.

UNFPA also supports improving the capacities of the government, civil society and private-sector institutions to strengthen adherence to sexual and reproductive health and rights global commitments, including ICPD and the 2030 Agenda, through revision and implementation of laws, policies and strategies. UNFPA is not funding any service delivery activities in China.

When China announced in 2015 that it was moving from the so-called one-child to a two child policy, UNFPA's statement on that policy change was unequivocal in its insistence on all countries' adherence to ICPD and the need to

fulfill the basic right of all couples and individuals in China to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children.

UNFPA strongly condemns any violations of women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, wherever they occur, promotes a human rights agenda, and opposes all forms of coercion. UNFPA uses every occasion and opportunity to speak about adherence to the ICPD principles. UNFPA also continues to urge the fulfillment of reproductive rights of women and young people.

The rights of girls and women are at the center of all of UNFPA's work. Many of the issues that UNFPA focuses on – from health care to ending harmful practices to ending trafficking and sex-selective abortion – are rooted in the equal rights of women and girls. The rights of girls and women and gender equality are preconditions for advancing development and reducing poverty.