ITEM 2

1. Persons with disabilities - Arjun Rawal, Nepal

Honorable ministers, distinguished guests, Respected delegates and all the representatives who are here today, I am Arjun Rawal, a visually impaired youth from Nepal, affiliated with the Blind Youth Association Nepal, and representing here today CSOs, youth and disability community from 25 countries in Asia and Pacific region that convened for a forum ahead of this 7th APPC on November 13-14, because you cannot decide for us without us.

The Asia Pacific region is home to 690 million persons with disabilities, who continue to live in isolation, discrimination, with limited to no access to health including sexual and reproductive health, education, employment and social life. Often persons with disabilities are not expected to be sexually active, let alone their sexual rights being accepted. Moreover, many persons with disabilities do not have access to services, or materials that facilitate their confidential access to SRHR information.

In 1994, the ICPD Program of Action did not even recognize the intersectional issues of persons with disabilities significantly and until the Asian Pacific Ministerial Declaration came out in 2013, the intersection of sexuality and disability was not prioritized.

In recent years, conversation around disability inclusion has just been started as imposed by the principle of leaving no one behind, recognized by the 2030 agenda. But, the interventions are very limited. The sexual and reproductive health and rights have still been overlooked by the stakeholders.

Hence, implementing APMD and its monitoring through indicator framework is imperative and foundational.

I urge the Member States to realize that the cost of exclusion is much higher than the cost of inclusion. We also urge the member states to strengthen health systems to deliver SRHR services using an adolescent, youth-centric, and disability friendly approach, as defined in international guidelines. Medical curricula must be inclusive of the health needs of all. The states must conduct gender, age, disability, and ethnicity disaggregated data collection and targeted data collection methods in order to reach those who are most marginalised and left behind.

We won't be able to achieve the promises of ICPD unless our actions consider persons with disability in intersection. Empowering the disability community, promoting accessibility in infrastructures, communication and information systems, and ensuring meaningful and inclusive participation of diverse persons with disabilities, will only ensure that this world is also for people like me. Lastly, I would like to say that “Make the right real”.

Thank you