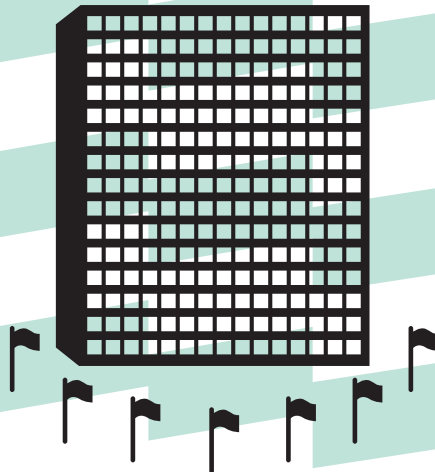


THE ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO UN LANGUAGE



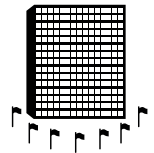
THE ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO UN LANGUAGE

"PP? OP?? BIS? TER?" WHAT?!

With all of the different terms flying around, at times it really can feel like the United Nations (UN) has its own special language, and it can be difficult to break through all the confusing technical jargon. CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality has developed this guide especially for youth advocates who are advocating for young people's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in order to help them successfully navigate language advocacy at the UN. This guide forms part of a series of resources aimed at demystifying international advocacy processes and making them more accessible to young people.

The series includes:

- ✓ **THE CHOICE SRHR GLOSSARY:** this glossary provides short and youth-friendly definitions of key SRHR terms.
- ✓ **FACTSHEETS ON KEY UN PROCESSES:** these resources provide you with information on what the process is about, why it is important, and how you can get involved. This series includes Factsheets on the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Commission on Population and Development (CPD), Human Rights Council (HRC), High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** and relevant Treaty Monitoring Bodies (TMBs).
- ✓ **SO YOU'RE GOING TO THE UN?:** a visual guide for youth advocates who are attending a UN process in New York for the first time. This guide explains what kinds of steps you can take to prepare, what you can expect once you are there, and how you can ensure follow-up once you're back home.



THE ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO UN LANGUAGE

1st edition, August 2017

This resource was created by CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality as part of the Right Here, Right Now! strategic partnership.

CHOICE FOR YOUTH & SEXUALITY



RIGHT HERE
RIGHT NOW

CHOICE is an ambitious and bold youth-led organization. We advocate for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people worldwide and support them to meaningfully participate and to voice and claim their rights. For more information on the work that we do please visit our website at choiceforyouth.org

Rutgers

For sexual and reproductive health and rights



arrow

CHOICE FOR YOUTH & SEXUALITY



HOW TO USE THIS UN LANGUAGE TOOL:

This tool was created for youth advocates looking to learn more about UN language advocacy: what it is, why it is important, and how to get started! The guide focuses on advocacy surrounding the language included in UN Outcome Documents (Agreed Conclusions and Resolutions) negotiated in New York-based processes like the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).





QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

The **Advocate's Guide to UN Language** is a living document, and we appreciate your input! CHOICE places a high value on being inclusive and participatory; if you feel like anything listed here is not accurate, or if we are missing something important, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@choiceforyouth.org

Don't forget to check out our other advocacy resources at www.choiceforyouth.org



This guide is made up of four parts:

-  **PART 1: UN LANGUAGE - WHAT IS IT & WHY DOES IT MATTER?**
An explanation of what UN language is, and why it is important.
-  **PART 2: GETTING INVOLVED**
Tips on how and when to get involved in UN language advocacy.
-  **PART 3: SRHR LANGUAGE AT THE UN**
An explanation of progressive and regressive SRHR language.
-  **PART 4: KEY TERMS**
An alphabetically ordered list of key terms and phrases (highlighted in bold pink throughout the text).

PART 1:

UN LANGUAGE – WHAT IS IT & WHY DOES IT MATTER?





SO WHAT IS UN LANGUAGE ADVOCACY?

Doing this type of advocacy means that you are advocating for your preferred language to be included in a UN text, for example, in the outcome documents of processes like the **Commission on the Status of Women** (CSW) or **Human Rights Council** (HRC), in **state recommendations** and **voluntary pledges** at the **Universal Periodic Review** (UPR), or in general comments and concluding observations of **Treaty Monitoring Bodies** such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Language advocacy is really ‘a battle of the words’: your ultimate aim is to have

new and more progressive language introduced (this can be a new term or an addition that makes the original text more inclusive and progressive, such as a **listing**). When doing advocacy around SRHR, CHOICE distinguishes between three types: language which is weak (bad or **regressive language**), neutral (neither regressive nor progressive language), or strong (**progressive language**, this is often also **new language**). At a minimum you try to maintain the baseline (the current **agreed language**) by defending against any **backsliding** (such as the addition of **qualifiers** and language that is not inclusive or rights based).

HOW IS UN LANGUAGE CREATED?

UN Language is created through the texts that come out of a **UN body** or process, like the CSW or the **Commission on Population and Development** (CPD). Broadly speaking, UN language can be created in three main ways:

- ✓ **Outcome documents** that are negotiated by UN Member States (such as **Agreed Conclusions** and **Resolutions** at the CSW, CPD, and **High-Level Political Forum** (HLPF)).
- ✓ Those that are compiled by experts (**general comments** and **concluding observations** made by Treaty Monitoring Bodies, and reports from **Special Rapporteurs**).
- ✓ Official comments made by Member States (voluntary pledges and state recommendations made at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and state reports submitted to the UPR, Treaty Monitoring Bodies, and the **Voluntary National Reviews** at the HLPF).

Each of these types are important in different ways: negotiated texts carry a lot of weight because UN member states support them, while questions and comments made by one member state to another are valuable because they carry political weight (for example, if your biggest trade partner recommends that you address a certain issue it's very hard for a state to simply ignore this). Similarly, the comments made by Treaty Body Experts in their concluding observations are made directly to a state, and are also followed up on in future review cycles - although do note that the UPR tends to carry more weight than a treaty body review, probably due to its highly political nature, you will often see that delegations to the UPR include high level representation, like the Minister of Foreign Affairs while delegations to the treaty body reviews are usually lower level, reflecting the importance

WHY IS UN LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

When member states agree to the commitments contained within an outcome document they can also be held accountable for actually implementing them. Before outcome documents are **adopted**, they go through a heavy negotiation and revision process. Since all of the Member States present have to reach an agreement on the text, it can be difficult to include strong and progressive language around sensitive issues, such as Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), as unfortunately, member states often have radically different views on what can or can't be said when it concerns these topics. For example, some member states do not recognize that LGBT persons exist in their country, and

a state places on their comments. Unfortunately it's a lot easier to ignore the language that comes out of the reports by Special Rapporteurs and the general comments made by Treaty Body Experts as these tend to be more progressive and are usually not directed at any one state in particular.

This resource will focus mostly on texts which are negotiated by UN member states, such as Agreed Conclusions and Resolutions. For more information about the processes surrounding the Treaty Monitoring Bodies and the Universal Periodic Review please see the CHOICE Glossary and our Factsheet series.

will therefore refuse to have any references to diverse Sexual Orientations and/or Gender Identities or Expressions (SOGIE) in the text. It is also important to note that even after going through an intensive negotiation process some states will still place **reservations** on certain parts of the text. For example, the Holy See, often better known as the Vatican put a reservation on the entire 'Women and Health' section in the landmark declaration on women's rights, the 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995', because this section had a strong focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

At the same time it is important to remember that aside from the language used in International Treaties or Conventions (which have to be signed and ratified by member states) UN language is never legally binding.

This means that even if a UN member state commits to reducing violence against women and girls in the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) there are no legal consequences for not taking action. However, this does not mean that governments cannot be held accountable for the commitments that they make! On the contrary, civil society has an important role to play in monitoring their government's implementation of these commitments at the country-level. There are many ways that civil society can ensure follow-up at the national level: by raising awareness of their governments commitments (both within the government and with the general public), monitoring how the government has taken action to meet these commitments, assessing whether these actions are actually effective, reporting on these efforts for the UPR or relevant Treaty Monitoring Body reviews, and offering technical advice and expert assistance to

help the government improve their implementation. Of course civil society can (and where possible, should) also implement the commitments that were made by member states at the UN-level themselves!

Gains in language can therefore over time also translate into gains on the ground; it becomes easier to advocate for a government to tackle a certain issue if they have already committed to addressing it in an international space for the whole world to see. Conversely, it can be very difficult to work on an issue if it isn't officially recognized as a problem, for example, if a state denies that LGBT persons exist in their country, it is almost impossible to ensure that the government protects these individuals from violence and discrimination. This is essentially the end-goal of UN language advocacy, and is what we call **accountability**; a state is held responsible for doing the things they have committed to in international and regional processes.



Furthermore, the language that comes out of official spaces like the UN can shape the way that we talk and think about issues on the ground, and therefore also contributes to what we call **global norm setting**. For example, the Fourth World Conference on Women which took place in Beijing in 1995 where the infamous phrase “women’s rights are human rights” originated, had a significant impact on the global discourse surrounding gender equality, and put women’s rights on the international radar as an important issue which could no longer be ignored. This gives hope that currently contentious issues like Sexual Rights and SOGIE will one day (soon) also become accepted into the used and agreed language at the UN.

PART 2: GETTING INVOLVED





OK, SO HOW DO I ACTUALLY “DO” LANGUAGE ADVOCACY?

This varies a little depending on the type of document you’re trying to influence, and of course also on the resources (time, funding, network etc.) you have available. For language that comes from member states (for example, outcome documents at the CSW, CPD and HLPF, and state recommendations at the UPR) your advocacy will focus on convincing the delegations of certain member states (either your own, or states that might be open to your recommendations) to take on your recommended language. These can be people from ministries that attend these processes because they are thematic experts, politicians, or diplomatic representatives from their countries’ permanent missions in either New York or Geneva. If you want to influence the texts produced by experts like the general comments and concluding observations made by treaty monitoring bodies, or the reports published by Special Rapporteurs you will need to focus your advocacy on influencing experts who could be open to taking on your recommendations.

These next few sections will focus on SRHR language advocacy on outcome documents of the CSW, CPD and HLPF. For more information on how to influence UN processes in Geneva see the additional resources on our website www.choiceforyouth.org.

WHAT DO OUTCOME DOCUMENTS LOOK LIKE?

If you want to get involved in influencing outcome documents at the CSW or CPD then it is important to understand the different parts they are made up of and the terminology that is used. All outcome documents start with **Preambular Paragraphs**, or PP’s; these are introductory paragraphs that set the stage for an outcome document by describing the current situation and often also reaffirming previous commitments that have already been made, varying from the Universal Declaration on Human Rights to other international agreements such as the Beijing Platform for Action. These introductory and reaffirming paragraphs are followed by **Operational Paragraphs**, or OP’s, which are calls for action to the undersigned member states. In these paragraphs member states commit to taking concrete



steps to improve the situation being discussed in the text.

During negotiations the paragraphs are numbered to make the text easier to follow and discuss (so you will have OP1, OP2 etc.) OPs can also have **sub-paragraphs**, which are referred to either by number (e.g. sub-1, sub-2 etc.), or by subject (e.g. sub-health), or both (e.g. sub-health1). You will also notice that Preambular Paragraphs start with a word that

clearly introduces or reaffirms such as *welcoming, recognizing, taking note or reaffirming*, whereas Operational Paragraphs start with an 'action' word directed at member states or governments, such as *calls upon* and *urges*, or somewhat weaker action-oriented language such as *invites* or *encourages*.

To the left you can see an example of how an outcome document is structured during the negotiation process. Note that once they are adopted outcome documents will take on a slightly more formal form; the text will remain the same but you will no longer see PP2, OP4 etc. The structure of the final version can vary a little depending on the UN body releasing it, for example, some may keep in the numbers and only remove the 'PP' and 'OP' in front of them, others will not number the PPs but use letters to number the OPs. To get an idea of what the final version can look like you can see the Agreed Conclusions adopted at the CSW and the Resolution adopted at the CPD both in 2016.

SO HOW EXACTLY DOES THIS PROCESS WORK?

As you can see in the image on the next page, UN language advocacy happens in a cycle - it begins in the preparation phase when you can start to collect evidence and begin lobbying with your delegation, and officially kicks off when the zero draft is released and you can begin providing concrete language suggestions. This draft is then continuously revised until the text is accepted and agreed upon, which is

Titel: draft #

Preambular Paragraphs(PP)

PP1

PP2

PP3 etc

Operational Paragraphs (OP)

OP1

OP2

bis

ter

quat

OP3

OP4

bis

ter

OP5

OP6 etc.

Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the declarations adopted by the Commission on the occasions of the tenth, fifteenth and twentieth anniversaries of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

2. The Commission reaffirms that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as other relevant conventions and treaties, provide an international legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all women and girls throughout their life cycle.

3. The Commission reaffirms that the promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, including the right to development, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty, and also reaffirms the need to take measures to ensure that every person is entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development and that equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the promotion, protection and full realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

4. The Commission reaffirms the commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls made at relevant United Nations summits and conferences, including the International Conference on Population and Development and its Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation. The Commission also reaffirms commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls made at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as the recognition of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the Third United Nations World

Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and recalls the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action, held on 27 September 2015, and the meeting of the Security Council, held on 13 October 2015, on women and peace and security.

5. The Commission reaffirms that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of its reviews, and the outcomes of relevant major United Nations conferences and summits and the follow-up to those conferences and summits, have laid a solid foundation for sustainable development and that the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will make a crucial contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that will leave no one behind.

6. The Commission acknowledges the important role played by regional conventions, instruments and initiatives in their respective regions and countries in the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, including for sustainable development.

7. The Commission welcomes the commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls contained in the 2030 agenda, recognizes that women play a vital role as agents of development and acknowledges that realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is crucial to making progress across all Sustainable Development Goals and targets. The Commission stresses that the achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if women and girls continue to be denied the full realization of their human rights and opportunities.

8. The Commission expresses concern that the feminization of poverty persists, and emphasizes that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The Commission acknowledges the mutually reinforcing links between the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the eradication of

OUTCOME DOCUMENT CSW'60

when the follow-up and implementation part of the cycle begins.

Throughout this process, the best way to influence these documents is through a **text mark-up** (sometimes also called a write-up), which involves going through a draft text and making recommendations on how the language can be improved (see the info box for more information on how to do a mark-up). You can do these mark-ups alone or in a group (like a

United Nations **E/RES/2016/25**

Economic and Social Council Date: General 15 August 2016

2016 session Agenda item 18 (f)

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 27 July 2016

[on the recommendation of the Commission on Population and Development (E/2016/25)]

2016/25. Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on Population and Development

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its decision 2015/252 of 22 July 2015, in which it decided that the Commission on Population and Development should review the functioning of its methods of work at its forty-ninth session, in 2016, with a view to further enhancing the impact of the work of the Commission and its contribution to the Economic and Social Council,

Recalling also its resolution 1995/55 of 28 July 1995 and its decision 2005/213 of 31 March 2005, as well as Commission on Population and Development resolution 2006/1 of 10 May 2006¹ and decisions 2004/2 of 26 March 2004² and 2005/2 of 14 April 2005³ on the methods of work of the Commission,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 68/1 of 20 September 2013, in which the Assembly called for the harmonization and coordination of the agendas and work programmes of the functional commissions, and emphasized the need to strengthen the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated follow-up of the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields, and recalling Council resolution 1981/83 of 24 July 1981, in which it instructed its subsidiary bodies to rationalize their agendas and programmes of work, resolution 1982/50 of 28 July 1982, in which it recommended that the documentation and programme of work of the subsidiary bodies of the Council be rationalized in order to enable them to effectively implement the mandates entrusted to them, and decision 1983/163 of 22 July 1983 with regard to the integration or consolidation of documents that deal with related or similar themes, with a view to rationalizing documentation, without having a negative impact on their technical quality, as necessary,

Recognizing the key role that the Economic and Social Council plays in achieving balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development,

¹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council*, 2006, Supplement No. 3 (E/2006/25), chap. I, sect. B.

² *Ibid.*, 2004, Supplement No. 5 (E/2004/25), chap. I, sect. B.

³ *Ibid.*, 2005, Supplement No. 5 (E/2005/25), chap. I, sect. B.

16-13483 (E)

Please recycle

OUTCOME DOCUMENT CPD'59

caucus or **major group**), and you can share them with your own country's delegation and/or with delegations of countries that could be supportive to your viewpoints (also known as countries who are 'friendly' or 'like-minded'). Usually the best way to do this is in person, by arranging formal meetings with your delegates, sending them an e-mail or whatsapp, or (as is more common) by approaching them during the breaks in the negotiation process.

UN LANGUAGE PROCESS



Phase 1: PREPARATIONS BEGIN

national level - start networking and researching your issues, advocates can submit a written oral statement



Phase 3: MONITORING & IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

national level - member states implement the agreements that they have made



Phase 2: UN PROCESS BEGINS

- 2.1 Zero draft is released several weeks in advance **National Level** - this is the first opportunity to provide language input
- 2.2. Oral Statements **New York, Formals** - accredited ECOSOC organisations can prepare oral statements and organisations with consultation status can draft written statements
- 2.3. First Reading **New York, Formals** - The negotiation process begins with a plenary session
- 2.4. Chair's revised text **New York** - negotiations continue in informals or informal informals
- 2.5 Second Reading **New York** - the negotiation process continues in the formals
- 2.6 Final version of the outcome document **New York**, negotiations finish in the informals
- 2.7 Adopted through Consensus or Rejected **New York, Informals** - member states all agree to adopt the text, if there is no consensus a chair's summary is released
- 2.8 Plenary **New York, Formals** - member states can provide statements clarifying their position and may place reservations on certain parts of the text, CSOs should make note of their delegations reservations



For more information on how to prepare and engage in the advocacy process see our UN Infographic tool "So You're Going to the UN!"

Generally speaking it's best to be involved throughout the whole process, starting in your own country before your country's delegation leaves, and continuing in New York while the text is being negotiated. If you cannot physically go to New York you can still play an active role within a caucus or major group by following the discussions in **listservs** and Google groups, and contributing to strategies and text mark-ups from afar. Of course you can also continue to lobby your government back home to advise your delegation on which position they should take!

SO WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS?



Phase 1: PREPARATIONS BEGIN

In **preparation** for a UN process like the CSW or the CPD, member states will usually take a couple of steps: (1) they will assign several people to form the official delegation for their country, (2) they will agree on what the key priorities are of their country, (3) if they usually negotiate within a regional block they will likely also have meetings with representatives from their countries to formulate their shared position, and (4) they may also organize a civil society briefing to meet with the CSOs who will be going to / following the New York process to share their priorities and any other information they have.

There are plenty of opportunities to get involved during the preparation phase. First of all, it is a good idea to see whether there are any civil society networks that you can join within your own country and abroad who will be advocating for similar issues. Many national civil society networks

will send their government and delegation a position paper and factsheets on the key issues they want their country to support ahead of time. If possible it is also a good idea to connect with the members of your delegation to build up a personal relationship with them ahead of New York, and to start advocating for your issues.

Depending on the event, the UN will also sometimes let civil society organizations with ECOSOC status register to give an oral statement during a plenary session. To apply you will need to draft your oral statement in advance, and it is good practice to include other organizations or networks in this process (who can also formally endorse your statement), so that your speech reflects a broad voice of civil society organizations. If you do not have ECOSOC status you can contribute to a statement from an organization that does. Keep in mind that this does not mean that you can't be the one to read out the statement once you are in New York! CHOICE does not yet have ECOSOC accreditation, and we are able to participate at the UN through our partner organizations that do.



Phase 2: UN PROCESS BEGINS

The first official step in a process like the CSW, CPD or HLPF is the sharing of a **zero draft** of the agreed conclusions and/or resolution that will be negotiated. Member states are able to provide their first language inputs on the zero draft before they go to New York, so this is your first opportunity to do a text mark-up (either alone or within a larger network) which you can share with

your own delegation and any other potentially supportive delegations.

TIPS FOR HOW TO DO A TEXT MARK-UP / WRITE-UP:

A text mark-up (sometimes also referred to as a write-up) is a form of language advocacy that is done when a draft text is still being negotiated. To do a mark-up advocates (either alone or in a group) will go through a text and edit it so that it reflects their own language priorities (in our case progressive references to SRHR).

Most mark-ups use the following key:

- Suggested additions to the text are **highlighted in yellow**
- Text that deserves support is **highlighted in green**
- Suggested deletions from the text are **struck through**
- If you include new paragraphs that are along the lines of a paragraph that addresses similar things they are usually numbered in latin as bis (two) , ter (three), quat (four), quin (five) etc., so you have an OP2bis and OP2ter before OP3 comes for example.
- Proposed alternative paragraphs are numbered as [paragraph number, alt], e.g. PP5 alt

It is also good practice to provide your argumentation in a comment box below the paragraph, as this will help delegates to understand why certain language is important and it will also provide them with arguments that they can use in the negotiations during the **informals** and **informal informals**.

After receiving feedback from all member states the **chair** of the negotiations will send out a compiled version where you can see all of the different inputs. It is a good idea to go through this document to get a feeling for which countries will be

supporting and opposing what, as this should help guide your advocacy with other delegations. The **first reading** will take place once the Commission officially starts in New York, and it is when the negotiation process really begins.



The negotiation of the outcome documents take place in what is called the **'informals'**. The negotiations will usually begin with the Chair's presentation of a **revised draft**, which will be negotiated throughout the next week(s), usually paragraph by paragraph. During the **second reading** the Chair presents the draft based on what he or she deems fit after what has been discussed in the informals and **informal informals**. Depending on how many new versions the Chair presents, there can be a third, or fourth, or even fifth reading. The Chair usually tries to keep these readings to a minimum because they are time-consuming. Therefore a lot of the text is discussed in informals and informal informals, instead of formals.

Paragraphs will be adopted throughout the negotiation process, with the most contentious ones usually being left until the end. The chair has a lot of power in this process, as they decide which paragraphs will be discussed when. More contentious issues may, for example, be negotiated in informal informals or **bilateral** discussions where states can try to reach an agreement with each other outside of the official negotiation space. A relatively uncommon process which a chair may choose to employ if a certain part of the text is particularly contentious, is the so-called 'silence procedure'. In the silence procedure a draft version of the text (usually just one or two paragraphs) is released by the chair. Member states do not have the possibility to make any changes, but can either accept the text as is (by remaining silent) or reject it (by breaking the silence). This is not a very common procedure, but can be done in cases where negotiations have reached a real deadlock and the chair feels no progress is being made.

The **final version** of the text can only be **adopted** if there is consensus. Alternatively, if the chair feels that consensus is not possible they can withdraw the final outcome document and release a 'chair's summary'. This final scenario is not desirable, as it means that member states cannot reach an agreement with each other, which threatens future negotiations and even the sustainability of the UN process. Indeed, some people may start questioning what the purpose or utility is of having a UN process where we cannot reach consensus, and if it continues to happen member states may argue to have the process removed all together. For this reason we should always aim to achieve a consensus – even if it means staying in the negotiation room until late in the night!

Aside from the informals where the negotiations take place, there are also plenary sessions called "**formals**", where member states discuss key issues on the agenda for that year, and may also provide oral and written statements. For example, near the start of the week you may see that there are several panel discussions, often led by experts, on the topics being discussed that year. Time permitting, some UN processes will also allow civil society representatives to read out an oral statement that they have submitted in advance. Furthermore, once the outcome document is adopted, some states may still choose to make an oral statement clarifying their position, or even to put a reservation on certain paragraphs. These plenary **reservations** offer member states an opportunity to publically and officially

state that they do not agree with certain articles (and will therefore also not be implementing them).

On the websites of the CSW, CPD, and HLPF you can access the agendas of previous years to get a feel for what is discussed during the plenary sessions, and you can also see older sessions on UN WebTV to get an idea what these look like in real life. Organizations with ECOSOC Status can also submit written statements (you can endorse these if you don't have that status). These statements are usually accepted on a first come first serve basis with a maximum of about twenty per session, and they will be included in the official report, and posted on the website of the UN process.

Finally, during the **monitoring & implementation** phase, states should be putting their words into action. During this phase it is important that civil society engages with their government to help ensure that their commitments are fulfilled. There are many ways to do this: you can advocate with your government to begin implementing their commitments, you can offer technical assistance and/or collaborate with your government directly, you can engage the media and the general public to draw their attention to the importance of these commitments and the actions the government has (not) taken, you can monitor implementation and offer advice and recommendations, and you can of course also implement the commitments yourself!



Phase 3: MONITORING & IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

WHERE DOES CHOICE COME IN? CHOICE engages in these advocacy processes by mapping previously agreed language, creating two-pagers and fact sheets on young people's SRHR, contributing to written statements and oral statements, hosting and co-hosting side-events and influencing the draft versions of text. CHOICE supports partners and youth advocates attending UN processes to ensure that young people from around the world are meaningfully participating and claiming their rights, including the Dutch Youth Ambassador for SRHR (a collaboration between CHOICE and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) who was a part of the Dutchdelegation to the CPD as youth civil society representative in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

THINKING OF GETTING INVOLVED IN UN ADVOCACY? Contact us at info@choiceforyouth.org to see how we can potentially collaborate!



CHOICEers advocating for inclusive SRHR language at the Commission on the Status of Women in 2016

PART 3: SRHR LANGUAGE AT THE UN





BUT WHAT IS GOOD LANGUAGE FOR SRHR?

As you've probably noticed UN texts really do seem to have a special language of their own; terms that might seem reasonable or progressive in everyday speech can be considered conservative or even regressive at the UN! To make things a little easier we've made a list of key terms relating to SRHR that you should be aware of, the terms listed in **green** are considered strong or progressive terms, **orange** are neutral, and **red** are considered weak or regressive.

To begin with, you might be surprised to hear that the verbs that you find at the beginning of each UN paragraph, can also be considered strong, neutral, or weak. In the table below you can get an idea of how these words are generally categorized.

STRONG
 Stressing
 Reiterates
 Urges
 Calls Upon
 Noting with concern /
 concerned that
 Deeply concerned
 Noting with appreciation
 Pledge to
 Commits to
 Expresses concern
 Strongly condemns
 Reaffirming
 Decides
 Affirm
 Emphasizing
 Commending

NEUTRAL
 Requests
 Welcoming
 Recommends
 Addressing
 Appreciating
 Bearing in mind
 Underlining

WEAK
 Acknowledging
 Recognizing
 Encourages
 Invites
 Notes
 Recalling
 Mindful

Of course when it comes to advocating for SRHR there is also strong, weak and neutral language. While it is not comprehensive, this next section gives you an idea of what kind language SRHR advocates support, and what to avoid.



GENERAL SRHR LANGUAGE

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: to date you will always see this as **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights** (SRH and RR), as **Sexual Rights** (SR) are seen as too controversial (usually because most people associate SR with SOGIE). Including SRHR in full is therefore a big goal for language advocates!

Sovereignty (clause): Human rights are universal, inalienable, and indivisible, and for this reason countries have an obligation to uphold them irrespective of their national policies, laws, and priorities. If delegates from a country or a group of countries want to add in what is called a sovereignty clause this greatly weakens member states obligations to implement the actions in the document. A sovereignty clause is a phrase (or sometimes even an entire paragraph) that **qualifies** what is said in a paragraph, by giving countries the option to only implement this paragraph if it fits within their laws and customs; in other words, as they see fit. This greatly weakens countries commitments to actually implementing the agreements contained in the text, as in effect they are only committing to changing what fits within their

national laws. For an example of what a sovereignty clause can look like see the text below taken from the CSW Agreed Conclusions in 2016:

“the **sovereign right** of each country to implement the recommendations of the Programme of Action or other proposals in the present resolution, **consistent with national laws and development priorities, with full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of its people**, and in conformity with universally recognized international human rights.” (CSW’60)

Outcomes of the review conferences: Both the **International Conference for Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action** and the **Beijing Platform for Action** have had regional review conferences where progress on implementing these agreements at the regional level was discussed. Importantly, the outcome documents of these review conferences are usually more progressive than those that come out of New York and Geneva, and have even included references to human rights, sexual rights, LGBTI rights, safe abortion, and other ‘sensitive’ SRHR issues. Including a reference to the outcomes of these review conferences (or any other more progressive process) means that member states accept these outcomes, and therefore also the progressive language within them. For this reason it is often difficult to keep these references in an outcome document.

Disaggregated qualitative and quantitative demographic data: this means data about populations or groups that is disaggregated (separated) by categories such as age (including 10-14, 14-24, and persons over 49, as these are two age groups that are frequently left out of data collection), gender (including non-binary identities), sexual orientation, socio-economic status, level of education, rural/urban etc. Ideally, it is good to add that this data should **be of high-quality, accessible, timely, and reliable.**

The reason we advocate for this kind of data is because it (should) play an essential role in the planning and implementation of policies and programs; after all how can you design an effective policy to reduce STI rates amongst high schoolers if you have no understanding of their situation (for example, information on how, when and why they have sex? Do they have challenges accessing contraceptives if they are unmarried or female? Do they understand how STIs are spread, and how to prevent and treat them? Is this an important issue for young people? How and with whom do they talk about it?).

A **Listing:** this is not technically an SRHR ‘term’, however, listings can be used to emphasize the inclusion of groups that are traditionally left out of official UN texts because it is a ‘sensitive issue’, for example, you might see something like “including young lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex individuals, young people living with disabilities,



young people living with HIV, young sex workers” etc. Note that listings can be tricky because there is always a risk of forgetting a key group which also deserves attention; for this reason it is important to either have as complete a listing as possible or to put “**for all**”.

Meaningful Youth Participation: especially when it comes to young people’s SRHR it is important that young people are enabled to meaningfully participate at all levels and in all stages of the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of any programmes and policies that target them, as well as those that don’t. For participation to be considered meaningful, young people must at a minimum be well-informed of their role and what their participation will contribute to, and their opinions are respected and taken seriously. There are many positive benefits to meaningful youth participation:

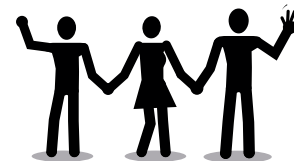
- ✓ The meaningful participation of young people in the research / development / implementation / monitoring / reviewing of advocacy strategies can increase the reach, attractiveness, relevance and effectiveness of advocacy on these issues, as they are more likely to take into account the actual lived realities of young people and ensure that their needs and opinions are reflected.

- ✓ The legitimacy of programs and advocacy strategies will also be increased if young people are meaningfully involved, giving them more influence and potentially expanding their constituency.
- ✓ Furthermore, when young people are given the opportunity to voice their opinion and to influence decisions on matters which affect their lives and those of their community, it is also a form of empowerment. Indeed, evidence shows that youth participation has a positive effect on young people themselves: on their knowledge, skills, confidence, autonomy, networks and opportunities.
- ✓ When talking about MYP it is important to remember that young people are an extremely diverse group; young people's experiences, challenges and opportunities can vary greatly based on their real or perceived gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression etc.

The participation and contributions of civil society: references to the important role that civil society has to play (and for CHOICE, especially youth-led organizations) are always good as they can help encourage member states to engage more meaningfully with civil society when monitoring and implementing their commitments.

Key Populations: When talking about HIV/AIDS, key populations are groups of people who are most likely to be exposed to HIV or to transmit it – they are seen as ‘key’ to combatting the epidemic and are central to the response. Please note that the term key population is preferred over the term ‘higher risk groups’ or ‘vulnerable groups’, and **Most at Risk Populations (MARPs)** because they imply that risk is contained within a certain social group. These terms may also create a false sense of security in people who engage in at risk behaviors but do not identify with these groups. Terms like these can also inadvertently increase stigma and discrimination against members within these groups; remember that membership of these groups does not place individuals at risk, it is the behaviors that they engage in (e.g. being a gay man does not mean you are at a higher risk for HIV, but engaging in unprotected anal/oral sex with one or multiple partners whose HIV-status is unknown does).

Harmful Practices such as Early and Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: It is good to get an acknowledgement that practices such as EFM and FGM/C are harmful in a text, as this compels governments to take action against these practices. It is important to ensure that there is no sovereignty clause included here, as this negates any commitments made.



YOUNG PEOPLE'S SEXUALITY

Delay of sexual debut: this term is considered disempowering because it implies that ideally young people should delay having sexual intercourse until they are older, and that young people who don't do this are doing something wrong. From a human rights based perspective we believe that everyone has a right to make informed and free decisions regarding their sexuality, regardless of their age, as long as they are able to consent.

Encouraging responsible sexual behaviour: again this phrase places a value judgement upon people's sexual behaviours (after all what is a 'responsible' decision?), and does not support young people's right to make their own informed decisions regarding their sexuality.

Abstinence and fidelity: while there is nothing wrong with choosing to remain abstinent or choosing to have one sexual partner, it is not ok to promote these choices as 'the ideal' way as this implies

that anyone who does not choose abstinence or fidelity is abnormal, or, in extreme forms even weak or morally corrupt.

Decide freely [and responsibly] on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence: Sentences like the three above are considered weak and regressive because they effectively try to police young people's sexuality, instead if you remove the "and responsibly" this language would be considered quite progressive as it promotes and respects young people's rights to make choices around their own sexuality without negative repercussions.



SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY & EXPRESSION (SOGIE)

Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination: This is considered strong language because it acknowledges that many people in the world experience discrimination from multiple factors (their gender, their sexual orientation, their socio-economic status etc.). This phrase has also been seen as a way 'to get SOGIE into the text', because while it does not explicitly refer to gender or sexuality it opens the door to recognizing multiple and intersecting identities.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE): SOGIE is still a very controversial topic at the UN, and unfortunately it can be difficult to even have an open discussion about anything to do with the words sexual orientation or gender identity. Alternative language includes calling for **"the promotion, protection and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all"** and **"recognizes the need to address persistent inequalities and discrimination on any grounds."**

Real or Perceived: when talking about SOGIE it is good to add this in as many people experience violence and discrimination because they are seen as being LGBT (e.g. by not behaving in a stereotypically 'feminine' or 'masculine' way).

"The Family": at first glance this seems like quite an innocent term, after all who doesn't like families? However, unfortunately at the UN this phrase has come to be seen as a way to deny LGBT persons their rights. Indeed, many anti-choice and anti-SRR advocates promote 'the protection of the family' as a way to exclude people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions, by emphasising the heterosexual couple and their children (the so-called 'nuclear family') as the desired norm, and thereby also implying that families consisting of two men, two women etc. are not actually families at all. Instead, **"Families in all their diversity"** or **"families in various forms"** are considered more progressive and inclusive terms, which acknowledges the different set-ups that families can have.



ACCESS TO SERVICES / INFORMATION

Comprehensive Sexuality Education: It is important to advocate for the term 'comprehensive sexuality education', (or even better **participatory, gender-sensitive, evidence- and human rights-based comprehensive sexuality education**) rather than just **sexual and reproductive health information or evidence based comprehensive education on human sexuality**, or worse, **sex education**, or **life skills training**. Advocating for 'comprehensive sexuality education', as opposed to just 'sexuality education' or 'sex education', ensures a holistic approach that is scientifically accurate and respects the rights of adolescents and youth. It also brings into line political commitments made by Member States with technical developments made by UN agencies in this area (indeed, the term 'comprehensive sexuality education' is widely used by UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA and UNAIDS). Definitely be sure to avoid any qualifiers such as **Age-appropriate, with appropriate direction and guidance from parents and legal guardians, culturally and age appropriate sexuality education** as these greatly weaken the text .

The full range of contraceptives: when mentioning contraceptives you always want to ensure that (young) people have access to the full range (**including emergency contraceptives**). Unfortunately, quite often you will see that access to contraceptives = access to male condoms, however, since not everyone is able to use, or even have access to male condoms, this greatly restricts some people's freedom in regards to their sexuality. As such, it is important that all (young) people are able to make free and informed decisions about which contraceptive method best suits their lifestyle.

To make informed decisions and claim their rights: it is not enough to say that (young) people should be able to make their own decisions regarding their sexuality, they also have a right to have access to accurate and evidence-based information which can help them decide which choice is best for them. For example, you can say that someone who has an STI may have made the decision to have ("unprotected") sex, however, if they are not aware how that particular STI can be transferred then they were not able to make a fully-informed decision. Without

¹ Although do note though that in contexts where terms like CSE are particularly loaded some may use these more neutral or regressive terms as entry-points at the national level. For example, when lobbying for CSE with the Ministry of Education you can advocate for life-skills training that includes components on SRHR, relationships etc.

access to this kind of information (young) people can make decisions without being aware of the potential negative consequences which can have severe repercussions on their life.

Youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services: not only should young people have unrestricted access to sexual and reproductive health services, it is important that these services are also youth-friendly. By youth-friendly we mean that young people are able to access these services anonymously and without parental/partner consent, the information they receive is comprehensive and easy to understand, they are not discriminated against or judged by service providers because of their age and marital status, etc. Note that “**universally accessible and available quality comprehensive sexual and reproductive health-care services, commodities, information and education**” and “**to provide non-discriminatory and comprehensive health services, including sexual and reproductive health services**” are also considered strong language.

Removing Barriers: sometimes you will see that laws or policies exist which allow (young) people to access SRH services but that there are social or legal barriers that prevent them from (fully) enjoying them. For example, in some contexts abortion could be legalized for all but can be made inaccessible because of the high cost of the procedure, long waiting lists, travel distance, or even a limited availability of clinics. All of these factors serve to create barriers that prevent people from accessing safe and legal abortions, and as such it is important that states and service work on removing these barriers.

Access to safe and legal abortion: you always want to ensure that there is access to safe (i.e. performed by trained medical professionals in a sterile environment using sterile instruments and modern technology), and legal (i.e. guaranteed to all by law) abortion for all individuals, regardless of age, marital status etc. If possible, avoid the inclusion of over-riding clauses such as ‘in circumstances where abortion is permitted by law’ or ‘in circumstances where abortion is not against the law’. However, if mentioning legality is inevitable, including “**in circumstances where abortion is not against the law**” and “**in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action**”, is considered less harmful as it limits the restrictions and not the possibilities. For more information on the Beijing Platform for Action please see the CHOICE Glossary.

PART 4: KEY TERMS





ACCOUNTABILITY: Accountability means ensuring that people take responsibility for the agreements that they have made, and are held accountable for their actions. In terms of advocacy, civil society can and should play an important role in holding their governments accountable to their agreements by ensuring that governments turn their commitments into concrete action, and by monitoring and evaluating their progress in this.

ADOPTED: You might also see this as “adopted ad ref”, this means that the text in question has been accepted by all of the member states present and is the final version of the text. Usually a text is not adopted all at once but paragraph by paragraph (so OPI has been adopted by all and has been closed for negotiations).

AGREED CONCLUSIONS: the negotiated final text, also sometimes called an Outcome Document; these are the ‘conclusions’ (PPs and OPs) that have been agreed upon by all of the member states present. Agreed conclusions contain an analysis of the priority theme and a set of concrete recommendations for governments, inter-governmental bodies and other institutions, civil society actors and other relevant stakeholders, to be implemented at the international, national, regional and local level. Agreed conclusions are mainly adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its subsidiary bodies (such as the Commission on the Status of Women and Commission on

Population and Development) as one of the outputs of their annual session.

AGREED LANGUAGE: this is language that has been negotiated and agreed upon in previous UN resolutions. Often this is seen by advocates as the starting point or the bare minimum that a new resolution should use.

AFRICAN GROUP/BLOCK: A group of African states that negotiate as ‘one’. Regional blocks can be a very negative thing as they require multiple states to reach a consensus on sensitive issues, which often results in weaker language.

BACKSLIDING: language that is more regressive than already agreed-upon language.

BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), often referred to simply as ‘Beijing’, is one of the key guiding documents on gender equality and women’s empowerment. Adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the BPfA outlines 12 “critical areas of concern” which are considered vital to the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment. The BPfA requires all governments who have ratified the document to develop policies and national plans of action detailing which steps will be taken to implement the

BPfA locally. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) monitors the implementation of the BPfA. Each year, the CSW adopts a series of action-oriented recommendations in the form of agreed conclusions and resolutions on one of the 12 critical areas of concern, and reviews progress on the implementation of agreed conclusions adopted in previous years.

BILATERALS: discussions or consultations between two parties or states. For example, between Spain and Jordan.

BRIEFING: an event or document which provides information on a certain topic. Many governments will organize civil society briefings for UN processes for people and organizations who will also attend. Civil society organizations may also provide their government with a policy brief, which outlines their key priorities and stance on certain issues.

CAUCUS: A group of people with shared concerns/viewpoints. UN processes like the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) often have several caucuses engaging in advocacy (e.g. the Women's Rights Caucus, the SOGIE Caucus etc.). There are many benefits to working within a caucus, including: more effective and strengthened advocacy; increased capacity and resources; knowledge/skill-building; networking etc.

CHAIR: this is the person who leads the negotiations. A new chair is selected each year, ensuring that different countries and regions are represented over time.

CHAIR /FACILITATOR'S TEXT: a text which is compiled or proposed by the chair of the

UN process based on input from member states during the negotiations.

CHAPEAU: the lead, or an introductory paragraph to a text.

CIVIL SOCIETY: Citizens and organizations outside of the government and private sector. CHOICE is a Civil Society Organization.

CLOSING STATEMENTS: statements delivered during the formals (plenary) at the end of a UN process; remember that because the texts are negotiated they will almost never fully represent every single member states official viewpoints and policies, as such closing statements give states the opportunity to publically elaborate on their country's position.

COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (CPD): The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) helps the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to monitor, review, and assess the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA) at the national, regional, and international level, and advises ECOSOC on: issues and trends regarding population and development strategies, the ICPD PoA etc. The CPD takes place yearly in New York to address key thematic issues which include adolescents and youth; ageing; environment; family planning; fertility; HIV/AIDS; international migration; marriage and unions; mortality; population policies; population trends; and urbanization.



COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

(CSW): The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) helps the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to monitor, review, and assess the implementation of the Beijing Programme for Action (BPfA) at the national, regional, and international level, and advises ECOSOC on issues and trends regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, and helps ECOSOC to set global standards and policies to promote gender equality and the advancement of women and girls worldwide. Every year member states gather at UN headquarters in New York to discuss issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and to negotiate a series of action-oriented outcome documents in the form of agreed conclusions and resolutions based on one of the issues highlighted in the BPfA.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

(CSE): Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is a form of sexuality education which recognizes that information on human sexuality alone is not enough, and therefore seeks to equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to determine and enjoy their sexuality in all spheres of life. CSE can contain multiple components such as gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), STIs, sexual citizenship, pleasure, consent, violence, sexual and gender diversity and relationships.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS: states that have ratified international treaties (e.g. the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or CRC) are reviewed every three-four years on how they are promoting and protecting the rights guaranteed within that treaty. This review is done by a body of international human rights experts (known as the Committee of that treaty, so in this example the Committee on the Rights of the Child), who provide the state with a list of concerns and recommendations in the form of concluding observations at the end of their review.

CONSENSUS: in the context of the UN, this means that all member states have agreed and accepted a certain text and it was not put to a vote.

DELEGATION: a group of people, usually government representatives but sometimes also members from civil society, who have been chosen by the state to go to the UN and attend as official representatives of their country.

EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE: sometimes referred to as 'child marriage', or 'child, early, and forced marriage', Early and Forced Marriage (EFM) is a comprehensive term which refers to marriages that occur under the age of 18 (early) and/or when someone enters into a marriage without the full and free consent of both parties

(forced). Forced marriage includes child marriage, but also human trafficking, ‘bride kidnapping’ etc.

ECOSOC: The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the five main organs of the United Nations (UN) and is responsible for coordinating the economic, social, and related work of 14 UN agencies (e.g. WHO, ILO, UNICEF etc.), their functional commissions (e.g. the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission on the Status of Women etc.) and five regional commissions (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific etc.). ECOSOC is the central platform at the UN for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to the UN member states.

ECOSOC STATUS: ECOSOC status is an official UN accreditation from the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that enables a civil society organization to enter UN property and attend UN processes.

“EXPLANATION OF POSITION”: this is a bit similar to a reservation (although not always negative) and is when countries explain the reasoning behind their vote or stance.

ENDORSE: to officially offer your support for something, for example civil society organizations may ‘endorse’ certain statements by adding their name to a list of signatories. Endorsements and joint-statements add weight to a text because they demonstrate that it enjoys broad support and thus represents and reflects the ideas and needs of a large group of people.

FACTSHEET: usually a short document which provides facts and information on a certain topic.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/ CUTTING: sometimes also known as female circumcision, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) comprises a range of procedures from cutting, removing, or sewing closed all or part of a vulva for non-medical reasons. FGM/C is usually done without consent of the individual and can have severe negative consequences on a person’s mental and physical health.

FORMALS: formal meetings; also sometimes referred to as the plenary. During ‘formals’ member states come together to discuss key issues on the agenda for that year, and may also give oral and written statements. For example, near the start of the week you may see that there are several panel discussions, often led by experts, on the topics being discussed that year. Unlike ‘informals’ civil society is usually able to attend the formals.

GENERAL COMMENT: in the context of Treaty Monitoring Bodies general comments are texts published by the Treaty Body’s Committee which further elaborate upon the rights protected by the treaty, and provide guidance on how to interpret those rights in regard to relevant issues. For example, while the international Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) does not mention SOGIE, the Committee on the Rights of the Child published General Comment No. 15 (2013) about children’s right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health, which included

references to the non-discrimination of sexual orientation and gender identity in order to fully realize the right of to health for all children.

GLOBAL NORM SETTING: the language used in UN texts also influences and reflects the way that we think and talk about a certain issue on a global level; it contributes to the evolution of global norms and values.

HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF): The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is a relatively new UN process which took place for the first time in New York in July 2016, and which was put in place to monitor and assess the global implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Like with the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), the HLPF has a yearly theme that explores a selection of SDGs which will be reviewed more in depth during the annual event in New York.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the world, and for addressing human rights violations and making recommendations on them. The HRC is made up of 47 UN member states which are elected by the UN General Assembly. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a

sub-organ of the HRC which reviews the human rights records of each UN Member State.

INFORMALS: the sessions where texts are being negotiated are called at the CSW, CPD, and HLPF. Civil society does not have access to the informals. Informal Informals: spaces where member states come together to discuss issues amongst themselves, for example, in the hallways or in the cafeteria.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (ICPD): the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) also sometimes referred to simply as “Cairo 1994” or “Cairo”, took place in Cairo, Egypt in 1994. The conference focused on population issues, including immigration, infant mortality, birth control, family planning, education, and unsafe abortion. The conference delegates achieved consensus on the following four goals which are enshrined in the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA): (1) universal education, (2) reduction of infant and child mortality, (3) reduction of maternal mortality, and (4) access to reproductive and sexual health services including family planning. The ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) is the steering document for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

JOINT STATEMENT: a statement created and supported (endorsed) by multiple parties. Joint statements tend to hold more weight because they show that several organizations/states agree on a certain issue.

LISTING: a list of social groups that you want to ensure are included in the text, for example, 'including young LGBTI persons, young persons living with a disability, young persons living with HIV or AIDS, young sex workers, young indigenous persons' etc.

MAJOR GROUPS: the Major Groups represent nine sectors of society that act as the main channels through which citizens and organizations can participate in UN activities.

MARK-UP / WRITE-UP: a form of language advocacy whereby you go through a draft text and adapt it so that it better reflects your advocacy priorities. Mark-ups are usually shared with delegations as input from civil society.

MINISTERIAL SEGMENT: this is when ministerial representatives (high-level persons) come together to discuss key issues on the agenda. This segment often results in the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration.

NEW LANGUAGE: this is language that has not yet made it into a UN outcome document or in some cases an outcome document specific to that UN body. For example, sometimes language that has been come out of the Human Rights Council (HRC) may be considered new language at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) because it has never been mentioned in a CSW resolution before.

OPERATIONAL PARAGRAPHS (OPS): the real 'meat' of the text, OPs are paragraphs that call the signatories to action.

"THE OPPOSITION": this one is probably pretty self-explanatory, the opposition is really anyone who is opposed to what you are advocating for.

OUTCOME DOCUMENT: a document that is the product of a certain UN process, for example a resolution from the Commission on Population and Development (CPD).

PEN HOLDER/HOLD THE PEN: this usually means to take the lead on something. For example, if a certain paragraph or subject has been particularly difficult to discuss, the chair might decide to assign one or more member states to become the pen-holder (to take the lead) and come up with a new text proposal that they feel would be more acceptable. These negotiations are often done informally/ behind the scenes.

POSITION PAPER: a paper which clarifies your position around certain issues. Civil Society organizations and UN member states often have position papers (e.g. the EU writes up a position paper together in Brussels ahead of any negotiations to ensure that they speak as one voice), although note that these are usually not shared publically.

PREAMBULAR PARAGRAPHS (PPS): these are always the first few paragraphs of a text and they serve as a sort of introduction which sets the stage for the rest of the document; usually this is just a reaffirma-

tion of the commitments on that subject that have already been made.

A QUALIFIER: similar to the sovereignty clause, a qualifier "qualifies" a statement; it adds a condition that exempts certain situations (e.g. you can access Sexual and Reproductive Health services as an unmarried young person, but only with parental consent).

READING: draft UN texts are discussed during what is called 'a reading'. Readings usually result in a set of draft paragraphs which combine different versions of the text (the proposals that different members states have given). At the end of the first reading the draft text is usually fairly advanced, although nothing is set in stone. Once this draft text has been adopted at the first reading, the second reading begins, during which member states will go through the different paragraphs, finalizing the text. At the end of the second reading a complete draft can be adopted.

RED LINE: a red line is the bare minimum that someone will accept - they will not go beyond this point (e.g. in language advocacy you might say the red line is previously agreed language, although you are aiming to get more progressive new language into the text if you do not achieve this you will not accept any regression).

REGIONAL BLOCK: a group of countries belonging to a certain region who decide to negotiate 'as one'. This means that members of the group commit to supporting or blocking the same things.

RESERVATION: ah, there is nothing like the feelings of sitting down with a brand new outcome document at the end of a long night of negotiations, only to have some states rattle off their reservations on almost half of the document. It is, however, an inevitable consequence to adopting documents with consensus, and as such reservations offer member states an opportunity to publically and officially state that they do not agree with certain parts of the document.

RESOLUTION: a UN resolution is a formal text adopted by a UN body like the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) or the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Although any UN body can issue a resolution, most of them come from the UN Security Council or the UN General Assembly. In terms of outcome documents, resolutions tend to carry more weight than Agreed Conclusions, as they are a formal expression of the opinion or will of a UN body, whereas agreed conclusions are more an output of a session.

SIDE-EVENT: special events organized during a UN process by member states

and civil society representatives, usually focused on a certain issue or theme.

SILENCE PROCEDURE: in the silence procedure a draft version of the text (usually just one or two contentious paragraphs) is released by the chair. Member states do not have the possibility to make any changes, they can either accept the text as is (by remaining silent) or reject it (by breaking the silence). This is not a very common procedure, but can be done in cases where negotiations have reached a real deadlock and the chair feels no progress is being made.

SOVEREIGNTY CLAUSE: a phrase that qualifies a text by adding in that any action it suggests should be in line with national laws. Sovereignty clauses should be avoided if possible.

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR: the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) can appoint Special Rapporteurs (independent experts) to 'examine, monitor, advise, and publicly report' on a specific country (e.g. Syria) or theme (e.g. Education) related to human rights. Thematic Special Rapporteurs are usually appointed to serve for three years, after which their mandate can be extended for another three. Country Special Rapporteurs are appointed for one year and their term can be renewed every year. Special Rapporteurs usually go on fact-finding missions to investigate allegations of human rights violations, however, they can only visit countries that have agreed to invite them.

STREAMLINE: to make something shorter and more succinct by combining different parts of a text.

STATE RECOMMENDATIONS: in the context of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) state recommendations are the comments made by member states to the state that is under review. For example, a state could recommend that the reviewed state should remove social, procedural, and legal barriers to ensure access to safe and legal abortion for all persons.

STRONG LANGUAGE: this is pretty self-explanatory, any language that would be considered very progressive and actively supportive of your cause would be considered strong, whereas weak language is anything that is conservative or which goes against your cause. What is considered strong or weak changes depending on the perspective of the person.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs): in September 2015, during the United Nations General Assembly, Member States agreed on and committed to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, which including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets which are supposed to be achieved by 2030. Amongst these SDGs and targets are a number which are relevant to SRHR in general, and in particular to young people. Those targets are 3.1, 3.3, 3.7, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.6. Although young people are not explicitly mentioned in the targets, the 2030 Agenda is meant to be universal and indicators are supposed to be disaggregated by a number of actors, including age, which will help to address young people's SRHR.

TREATY MONITORING BODIES: Treaty Monitoring Bodies are committees of independent experts who monitor the implementation of international human rights treaties, for example, the Committee on the Rights of the Child monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its optional protocols. States which are signatory to these treaties are reviewed every few years by the monitoring body, who provides them with specific recommendations on how to improve their implementation of the treaty.

UNITED NATIONS (UN): An international organization consisting of 193 countries or 'Member States' which aims to support and enhance cooperation in international law, international security, economic development, human rights, and working towards world peace. The UN is made up of many different parts, each with their own specific set of responsibilities. There are five main UN 'organs' (parts): (1) the General Assembly, or GA; (2) the Security Council, or SC; (3) The Economic and Social Council, or ECOSOC; (4) the Secretariat; and (5) the International Court of Justice, or ICJ. Until the mid-90s there was a sixth organ, the Trusteeship Council, which oversaw conquered territories, however, the Council stopped operating in 1994. These five organs together form the basis of the UN, and it is through these organs that all of the UN's work takes place. Within each organ there are many

other smaller parts (like agencies or treaty-monitoring bodies), that help these organs function well.

UN BODY: a part of the UN; while UN bodies may have different methods of work and decision-making procedures they are all interrelated and contribute to a larger whole (the UN).

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is the main decision making organ of the UN. The UNGA considers how the UN is run and looks at new policies. All 193 member states participate in the General Assembly, and each country has one vote. UN Member States: There are 193 UN Member States. Each one is a member of, and has an equal role in, the UN General Assembly, and may participate to different extents in other UN organs (e.g. the Security Council) and processes.

UN PROCESS: this is a general term used to describe several processes that form a part of the UN in New York and in Geneva, such as the Universal Periodic Review, the Commission on Population and Development, the High-Level Political Forum etc.

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW: The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a process set up by the UN's Human Rights Council (HRC) which periodically reviews the human



rights records of all 193 UN Member States. The UPR is intended to complement the work of other human rights mechanisms, including the UN Treaty Monitoring Bodies.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW: this is a voluntary process that reviews a member states progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

VOLUNTARY PLEDGES: member states often make voluntary pledges (a statement detailing certain measures they will take) to improve the human rights situation in their country/region/internationally when they are presenting their candidacy for the Human Rights Council (HRC). Member states may also make voluntary pledges when they are under review during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

WATER(ED) DOWN: this is another way of saying that something is being diluted, for example, you might start with strong language but by adding in a qualifier you dilute the statement so that it is less strong, and probably also less controversial.

WEAK LANGUAGE: this is pretty self-explanatory, any language that would be considered very progressive and actively supportive of your cause would be considered strong, whereas weak language is anything that is conservative or which goes against your cause. What is considered strong or weak changes depending on the perspective of the person.

YOUTH: The UN defines youth, as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. CHOICE applies a broader definition of youth: young people aged between 10 and 29 years.

YOUTH BULGE: The Youth Bulge, also referred to as the Youth Dividend, Demographic Dividend, is a phenomenon whereby high rates of birth and low rates of infant mortality result in a large percentage of the population being under the age of 25.

YOUTH-LED ADVOCACY: The definition is already in the name - youth-led advocacy is advocacy led by young people! This means that young people are meaningfully involved in every aspect of the advocacy process - from selecting the issue, the audience, and the advocacy strategies, to conducting advocacy themselves, and to monitoring and evaluating the successes and the areas for improvement. Youth-led advocacy is important because it meaningfully involves young people to ensure that their voices are heard and taken into account.

YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATION: CHOICE prides itself on being a youth-led organization, but what do we actually mean when we say that? Youth-led means that an organization is led by young people, and usually also works for young people (although this is not necessary!). As the name suggests, for an organization to be truly youth-led all of its decision-making positions must be filled by young people. These positions should not be symbolic - young people should have real deci-

sion-making power and are leading the organization. Furthermore, for an organization to be youth-led most, if not all, of its members should be young people, although it is possible for some adults to have a role in the organization. For example, CHOICE's financial controller is over the age of 29.

ZERO DRAFT: this is the very first draft of the text, any drafts that come after this will be numbered (draft 1, draft 2 etc.).





QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

The Advocates Guide to UN Language is a living document, and we appreciate your input! CHOICE places a high value on being inclusive and participatory; if you feel like anything listed here is not accurate, or if we are missing something important, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@choiceforyouth.org

Don't forget to check out our other advocacy resources at www.choiceforyouth.org

THE ADVOCATES GUIDE TO UN LANGUAGE

1st edition, August 2017

CHOICE FOR YOUTH & SEXUALITY



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CHOICE FOR YOUTH & SEXUALITY



RIGHT HERE
RIGHT NOW