



DECLARATION OF SEXUAL RIGHTS

In recognition that sexual rights are essential for the achievement of the highest attainable sexual health, the World Association for Sexual Health:

STATES that sexual rights are grounded in universal human rights that are already recognized in international and regional human rights documents, in national constitutions and laws, human rights standards and principles, and in scientific knowledge related to human sexuality and sexual health.

REAFFIRMS that sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life, encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles, and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors.

RECOGNIZES that sexuality is a source of pleasure and wellbeing and contributes to overall fulfillment and satisfaction.

REAFFIRMS that sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social wellbeing in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

REAFFIRMS that sexual health cannot be defined, understood or made operational without a broad understanding of sexuality.

REAFFIRMS that for sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.

RECOGNIZES that sexual rights are based on the inherent freedom, dignity, and equality of all human beings and include a commitment to protection from harm.

STATES that equality and non-discrimination are foundational to all human rights protection and promotion and include the prohibition of any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, including disability, age, nationality, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, health status, place of residence, economic and social situation.

RECOGNIZES that persons' sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and bodily diversities require human rights protection.

RECOGNIZES that all types of violence, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, and stigmatization are violations of human rights, and impact the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

AFFIRMS that the obligations to respect, protect and fulfill human rights apply to all sexual rights and freedoms.

AFFIRMS that sexual rights protect all people's rights to fulfill and express their sexuality and enjoy sexual health, with due regard for the rights of others.

Sexual rights are human rights pertaining to sexuality:

1. The right to equality and non-discrimination

Everyone is entitled to enjoy all sexual rights set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnicity, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, place of residence, property, birth, disability, age, nationality, marital and family status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, health status, economic and social situation and other status.

2. The right to life, liberty, and security of the person

Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security that cannot be arbitrarily threatened, limited, or taken away for reasons related to sexuality. These include: sexual orientation, consensual sexual behavior and practices, gender identity and expression, or because of accessing or providing services related to sexual and reproductive health.

3. The right to autonomy and bodily integrity

Everyone has the right to control and decide freely on matters related to their sexuality and their body. This includes the choice of sexual behaviors, practices, partners and relationships with due regard to the rights of others. Free and informed decision making requires free and informed consent prior to any sexually-related testing, interventions, therapies, surgeries, or research.

4. The right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment

Everyone shall be free from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment related to sexuality, including: harmful traditional practices; forced sterilization, contraception, or abortion; and other forms of torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment perpetrated for reasons related to someone's sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and bodily diversity.

5. The right to be free from all forms of violence and coercion

Everyone shall be free from sexuality related violence and coercion, including: rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, sexual exploitation and slavery, trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, virginity testing, and violence committed because of real or perceived sexual practices, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and bodily diversity.

6. The right to privacy

Everyone has the right to privacy related to sexuality, sexual life, and choices regarding their own body and consensual sexual relations and practices without arbitrary interference and intrusion. This includes the right to control the disclosure of sexuality-related personal information to others.

7. The right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual health; with the possibility of pleasurable, satisfying, and safe sexual experiences

Everyone has the right to the highest attainable level of health and wellbeing in relation to sexuality, including the possibility of pleasurable, satisfying, and safe sexual experiences. This requires the availability, accessibility, acceptability of quality health services and access to the conditions that influence and determine health including sexual health.

8. The right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its application

Everyone has the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications in relation to sexuality and sexual health.

9. The right to information

Everyone shall have access to scientifically accurate and understandable information related to sexuality, sexual health, and sexual rights through diverse sources. Such information should not be arbitrarily censored, withheld, or intentionally misrepresented.

10. The right to education and the right to comprehensive sexuality education

Everyone has the right to education and comprehensive sexuality education. Comprehensive sexuality education must be age appropriate, scientifically accurate, culturally competent, and grounded in human rights, gender equality, and a positive approach to sexuality and pleasure.

11. The right to enter, form, and dissolve marriage and other similar types of relationships based on equality and full and free consent

Everyone has the right to choose whether or not to marry and to enter freely and with full and free consent into marriage, partnership or other similar relationships. All persons are entitled to equal rights entering into, during, and at dissolution of marriage, partnership and other similar relationships, without discrimination and exclusion of any kind. This right includes equal entitlements to social welfare and other benefits regardless of the form of such relationships.

12. The right to decide whether to have children, the number and spacing of children, and to have the information and the means to do so

Everyone has the right to decide whether to have children and the number and spacing of children. To exercise this right requires access to the conditions that influence and determine health and wellbeing, including sexual and reproductive health services related to pregnancy, contraception, fertility, pregnancy termination, and adoption.

13. The right to the freedom of thought, opinion, and expression

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, opinion, and expression regarding sexuality and has the right to express their own sexuality through, for example, appearance, communication, and behavior, with due respect to the rights of others.

14. The right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly

Everyone has the right to peacefully organize, associate, assemble, demonstrate, and advocate including about sexuality, sexual health, and sexual rights.

15. The right to participation in public and political life

Everyone is entitled to an environment that enables active, free, and meaningful participation in and contribution to the civil, economic, social, cultural, political, and other aspects of human life at local, national, regional, and international levels. In particular, all persons are entitled to participate in the development and implementation of policies that determine their welfare, including their sexuality and sexual health.

16. The right to access to justice, remedies, and redress

Everyone has the right to access to justice, remedies, and redress for violations of their sexual rights. This requires effective, adequate, accessible, and appropriate educative, legislative, judicial, and other measures. Remedies include redress through restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantee of non-repetition.

The *World Association for Sexual Health (WAS)* is a multidisciplinary, world-wide group of scientific societies, NGOs and professionals in the field of human sexuality which promotes sexual health throughout the lifespan and through the world by developing, promoting and supporting sexology and sexual rights for all. The WAS accomplishes this by advocacy actions, networking, facilitating the exchange of information, ideas and experiences and advancing scientifically based sexuality research, sexuality education and clinical sexology, with a trans-disciplinary approach. The *WAS Declaration of Sexual Rights* was originally proclaimed at the 13th World Congress of Sexology in Valencia, Spain in 1997 and then, in 1999, a revision was approved in Hong Kong by the WAS General Assembly and then reaffirmed in the *WAS Declaration: Sexual Health for the Millenium (2008)*. This revised declaration was approved by the WAS Advisory Council in March, 2014.