



**UNFPA Side Event
High Level Political Forum**

Intergenerational Action for Bodily Autonomy - Accelerating SDG3

Convened by UNFPA and the Government of Argentina

07:30-09:00 Eastern Standard Time, 8 July 2021

My name is Alexandra Chichikova!

Greetings from Belarus. It is a great honor and privilege for me to be invited as a keynote speaker at this important dialogue, taking place along the margins of the 2021 High-Level Political Forum. This is a topic that is near and dear to me.

As the key influencers, religious leaders, representatives of non-profit organizations and public associations together we are searching how to support bodily autonomy, of women and girls, and other vulnerable groups everywhere, especially in the broader context of health and rights for all.

I would like to express my appreciation to UNFPA and its Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem, for her leadership and selfless commitment to our organization's cause. I also would like to thank the co-convenor Honourable Carla Vizzotti, Minister of Health of Argentina and indeed you all for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Every woman has her wishes, her feelings, her talents, her dreams. She can become a diplomat, a doctor, an advocate, a farmer, or she can become a mother... but only when she wants it. Women all over the world have their rights to family planning, rights to decide whether and when to give birth. And they definitely have the right to say 'no' to unwilling touches, 'no' to forced marriages, 'no' to human trafficking and 'no' to harmful practices.

Women have rights.

And our mission is to be vigilant about the respect for human rights, to ensure that rights of women and girls are upheld by all.

Despite all measures taken, nowadays we can see how the Covid-19 pandemic badly affected the situation with regards to gender equality, the access to family planning services and the SRHR of women and girls in general. Women and girls faced the fact that in hard times their rights are not treated as really significant.

Today's event is dedicated to bodily autonomy.

Bodily autonomy is not only the ability for women and girls to make their choice regarding their body. It is the ability to make their choice regarding their future as well... and therefore the future of their families, communities, and societies at large. The ability of women to control their own sexual and reproductive choice, the ability to leave without pressure and free from violence will enable gender equality and a peaceful inclusive society.

Bodily autonomy means much more than basic rights. It is a gateway to the future for each personality. When our bodily autonomy is secured, we can be our true selves, try something new, release our potential. Bodily autonomy is a shield that prevents hurting us and breaking our dreams. Only behind this shield we can truly listen to our own hearts and follow our own dreams.

Securing bodily autonomy requires integrated and cross-cutting approaches. Efforts from non-governmental organisations will not be enough. We need state leaders, politicians, ministries of health, gender, planning, finance, international and regional organisations to join forces and to collaborate effectively with local influencers, religious and traditional community leaders.

We must reach consensus on such an important topic as bodily autonomy; Consensus between different cultural groups, between different religious and civil societies, and between generations as well. It is impossible to switch from an imperfect world to a perfect world one overnight. Changing our world for the better day by day, step by step is possible only if all generations understand and share the values and accept the need to change.

This is why today's discussion is so important, this is why I am here, this is why we are all here.

I am excited to learn from all the experts that are here today.

In the High-Level Commission on ICPD25 Follow-up, we work on the 2021 report, in which we are planning to be very clear about the meaning of "rights" in the context of sexual and reproductive health and bodily autonomy. We're going to illustrate that SRHR, bodily autonomy and people's agency, (эйжинси) is more than a health issue; as it is interconnected to social and economic justice, it is a sustainable development issue!

As a member of the High-Level Commission I will work to make sure that the messages and actions that are highlighted today become a part of our agenda as we continue to fight for gender equality, SRHR, bodily autonomy and a more sustainable world for us.