**Challenges and discrimination faced by young people in the realization of their rights**

Dear delegates, my name is Pip Gardner, my pronouns are they/them, and I am part of the Generation Equality Youth Task Force.

Having been part of the 25 year review of the Beijing Declaration, I am struck by the lack of progress and, in fact, increased challenges and discrimination faced by young people in the realization of their rights, particularly on the basis of their gender.

Beijing reverberated with the cry of ‘Women’s Rights Are Human Rights’, but this phrase has not lost relevance today. Instead, feminist movements have needed to additionally proclaim ‘Transgender Rights Are Human Rights’, as well as highlight how the intersection with race, disability and immigration status compound discrimination.

Paragraph 96 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action declares: “The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.”

And paragraphs 107 (e) and 108 (k) call for action to enable adolescents and young people to have “accessible information…about their health, especially information on sexuality and reproduction…ensuring…the best interests of the child are a primary consideration.”

These rights and the actions needed to fulfil them are inclusive of women, children and young people in all their diversity, including those who are transgender, afro-descendent, trafficked and/or disabled.

In many countries, including right now in the UK and the USA, we are seeing the sexual and reproductive rights of all youth, and in fact all people, being challenged legally by using lawmakers willingness to discriminate against transgender youth as a mechanism to roll back established legal precedents for informed consent. These laws are either implemented in a prejudiced way only against transgender children, or they additionally remove others access to potentially life-saving healthcare, arguably in contravention of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

These rulings are discrimination against minorities to create a foothold for further challenges to the fulfilment of the human rights of the majority.

The pandemic has exposed inequality, inequity and injustice for many more to see, and indeed internationally governments are finding it harder to hide from. We have opportunity to and we must tackle the prejudices inherent in current power structures which are the barrier to the fulfilment of human rights for all youth. This work must take place with diverse youth engaged meaningfully in the process. There can be nothing about us, without us, and we must not leave any young person behind.

Thank you.