

## Singer questions reproductive freedom at women's rights conference

by Xavier Symons | Jun 08, 2013 |

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Princeton ethicist Peter Singer (at about 16 minutes in video) provoked an uproar at last week's Women Deliver 2013 conference in Kuala Lumpur, a major international talkfest featuring the acting head of UN Women, Lakshmi Puri, former New Zealand prime minister Helen Clark, former Finland president Tarja Halonen, African Women's Development Fund CEO Theo Sowa, and Princess Mary of Denmark.

Singer denied the absoluteness of reproductive rights. He argued that there are "imaginable circumstances" when these rights could be overridden. He compared children to cattle grazing in a field, and said that overriding procreation may be necessary to avoid environmental catastrophe:

"Turns out that the right to graze as many cows as you like on the common was not an absolute right... Obviously this is what I think we ought to be saying even about how many children we have... I hope we don't get to a point where we do have to override it... but I don't think we ought to shrink away from considering that as a possibility." Babtunde Osotimehin, executive director of the UNFPA, objected, "There is no way we will come to a point where we are limiting the rights of people in this way." Osotimehin emphasised that "global population growth is actually coming down" and that predictions of worldwide famine and overpopulation disaster were way off the mark.

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