

COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Contribution from the Commission on Population and Development to the Integration Segment of the Economic and Social Council

Submitted by

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A. Background

The Commission on Population and Development held its 50th session in New York from 3 to 7 April 2017. The special theme of the session was “Changing population age structures and sustainable development”. Participants included delegations from 46 elected members of the Commission and observers from about 80 other Member States, two non-Member States, several intergovernmental organizations, UN regional commissions, and other entities of the UN system. Roughly 160 representatives of more than 65 non-governmental organizations participated as well. Member States shared national experiences of implementation through their statements in the plenary meetings and during an afternoon segment devoted to national voluntary presentations, which allowed for a more detailed examination of the situation in eight countries.

Member States also participated in informal consultations on a draft resolution on the special theme of the session. The consultations started on 29 March and ended on 7 April in the afternoon, just before the final plenary meeting of the annual session. Despite the strenuous efforts of the Chair, the co-facilitators and everyone involved, consensus was lacking on some key topics, and therefore no resolution was adopted. Nevertheless, the session’s documentation and deliberations provide useful information on means of integrating the eradication of poverty into development policies affecting population processes. Throughout the recent session, Member States expressed their broad agreement on several key aspects of this topic.

B. Contribution to the theme of the Integration Segment, “Making eradication of poverty an integral objective of all policies: What will it take?”

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development underscored the essential linkages between population and development, emphasizing that population, poverty, patterns of production and consumption and the environment are so closely interconnected that none can be considered in isolation. As stated in Principle 7 of the Programme of Action, “All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of *eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development*, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world. The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed, shall be given special priority....” [emphasis added]

The 50th session of the Commission on Population and Development addressed the topic of poverty eradication in the context of its special theme on changing population age structures and sustainable

development. The topic was considered in two reports of the Secretary-General prepared for the session, in plenary statements made by Member States and in the discussion on the draft resolution.

Across the board, the 50th session of the Commission on Population and Development emphasized that taking account of changing population age structures as part of development planning is essential for achieving the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the eradication of poverty. The reports of the Secretary-General documented the changes taking place in the age distribution of human populations. On a global scale, these changes include a decline in the number of children and youth as a proportion of the world's population, stability in the relative size of the working-age population, and rapid growth in the share of older persons. In light of these changes, which inevitably accompany the transition toward longer lives and smaller families, the reports draw attention to a range of policies that can contribute to sustainable development in general and to the eradication of poverty in particular (SDG target 1.1).

For countries with high levels of fertility and youthful populations, policies recommended in the reports include: ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services (target 3.7), upholding reproductive rights (target 5.6), eliminating harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage (target 5.3), and expanding investments in human capital through programmes to support education (Goal 4) and health (Goal 3), especially for children and youth. For countries at intermediate or advanced stages of population ageing, relevant policies include: promoting female labour force participation and productive employment, ensuring access to affordable child-care and parental leave for both mothers and fathers, investing in education and health throughout the life course, and expanding the coverage of pension systems to ensure a minimum level of income security for all older persons, in accordance with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and with SDG target 1.3 on implementing social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and target 5.4 on recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies.

During the recent session, Member States stressed that the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action remains crucial for ending hunger and poverty in all its forms. Member States recognized that changes in the population age distribution reflect great achievements, including increased survival and longer life spans, as well as parents' greater ability to control the number and timing of any children they may wish to have. They also emphasized the need to take account of population trends, including changing age structures, as an integral part of development planning. Falling levels of fertility, leading to increasing proportions of the population in the working age range, were opening an important demographic window of opportunity in some countries.

Although there was a lack of agreement in the negotiations on the draft resolution regarding reproductive rights and sexuality education, throughout the session Member States voiced their broad agreement on other important topics, including the role of the demographic transition as the driver of changing population age structures and the relevance of such changes to various aspects of sustainable development. There was consensus, as well, on the importance of supporting investments in education and health, including sexual and reproductive health, and of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment for reaping the demographic dividend and advancing sustainable development, including the eradication of poverty. There was also broad agreement on the importance of promoting youth employment and participation, and supporting the needs of older persons. Children, adolescents and youth, as well as older persons, were identified as age groups having priority for attention. Countries described the policies and programmes they were implementing to address the health, welfare and inclusion of growing populations of older persons. To promote active ageing, countries emphasized the importance of ensuring that continued participation in the labour force and in society at large remains an option at older ages. An ageing population also requires attending to the long-term sustainability of social security and pension systems, which may require adjustments, for example, in the age of eligibility for full benefits.