

**Oral Statement submitted by *Vida y Familia (VIFAC)*, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

Vida y Familia is a pioneering non-profit institution based in Mexico, which protects and provides for pregnant women and their unborn children in distress. As an organization which deals with providing quality health care and promoting education for young women especially, we welcome the Commission on Population and Development's theme of the 45th Session, "Adolescents and youth."

Mr. Chairman, the UN Population Division indicates that 48% of the world's population is below the level needed to replace itself. By 2100, 82% will be below replacement.<sup>1</sup> In the short term, nations reap a "demographic dividend" from lower fertility rates, but in the long run this dividend must be repaid as a large elderly population retires and a smaller younger population struggles to support them. The economic and social impacts of fewer and fewer youth are massive. As life spans increase and fertility rates decrease over the next 40 years, 53% of world population growth will come from increasing numbers of people over age 60, while only 7% will come from people under age 30.<sup>2</sup> The world is aging and youth hold the key to sustainability.

In 2010, Mexican health programs cost about \$5 billion. By 2050, they will cost \$51 billion as the population over age 60 increases from 10% to 27% of the population as a whole<sup>3</sup>. As in most countries with rising health care costs, the burden of those costs are economically unsustainable without a young working population. In light of low fertility rates around the world, contraception shouldn't be the primary focus of health care. Instead, "governments should ensure community participation in health policy planning, especially with respect to the long-term care of the elderly."<sup>4</sup> Youth productivity is necessary to ensure access to health care for themselves and older generations.

Broad "access to education is also a factor in the composition of the working population."<sup>5</sup> A substantial working population is necessary to sustain aging retirees and to fire the engines of economic growth. Indeed, "the relationship between education and demographic and social changes is one of interdependence,"<sup>6</sup> yet the report of Secretary General focuses on sexual education at the expense of basic education that raises living standards and guides development.

Desiring to "encourage youth to continue education in order to equip them for a better life and increase their human potential,"<sup>7</sup> we reaffirm the "need for educational programmes in favour of life planning skills, healthy lifestyles and the active discouragement of substance abuse"<sup>8</sup> so that society can "meet the needs and aspirations of youth."<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Chairman, "the family is the basic unit of society... It is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support" so it may "fulfill its vital role in preparing the next generation of youth to become positive contributors to society."<sup>10</sup> When family ties break down, youth are "increasingly exposed to risks such as dropping out of school, labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, premature pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases."<sup>11</sup>

Marriages where husband and wife are equal partners create the stable environment necessary to provide adequate health and education for youth.

It is important to pay particular attention to the “needs of adolescents to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality”<sup>12</sup> “including voluntary sexual abstinence.”<sup>13</sup> Recalling that “governments should take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning,”<sup>14</sup> our organization helps women access legal channels to give their children to loving adoptive families, thus preventing unexpected children from being abandoned or becoming victims of abuse, exploitation and marginalization. From 1985 to today, VIFAC has provided care to more than 18,000 women and their children, of whom 80% have lived in shelters and 20% have been supported externally. Afterward, women are reintegrated as productive members of society. We encourage other non-governmental organizations to consider the efficient model of cooperation with government agencies that VIFAC uses to provide support to pregnant women in distress, especially those in situations of social vulnerability.

As a young person, representing an organization that focuses on youth, I fully believe that population growth brings with it tremendous promise for the developing world, because the human person’s capacity for innovation is the driver of development. Instead of viewing youth as consumers of scarce resources, the world must see us as producers of medicine, technology, and information; creators of economic growth that will lead the world into a brighter future.

---

<sup>1</sup>UN Population Division, 2011, <sup>2</sup>Social Trends Institute, 2011 <sup>3</sup>Ana Vazquez of Anahuac University <sup>4</sup>ICPD 8.7, <sup>5&6</sup>ICPD 11.3, <sup>7</sup>ICPD 6.7c, <sup>8</sup>ICPD 6.15, <sup>9</sup>ICPD 6.13, <sup>10</sup>ICPD 2.9, <sup>11</sup>ICPD 5.7, <sup>12</sup>ICPD 7.23, <sup>13</sup>ICPD 8.35, <sup>14</sup>ICPD 7.24