

Statement on agenda item 5 by Mr. Lambert Grijns, Ambassador for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights & HIV/AIDS and Director of the Social Development Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

*Agenda item 5: The relation between population and development issues and the theme of this year's Annual Ministerial Review (ECOSOC) "Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future".*

Thank you, Chair.

I am speaking on behalf of the Netherlands.

Distinguished delegates, colleagues, friends,

We are pleased that the president of ECOSOC has given us the opportunity to discuss the contribution of population and development in meeting the MDGs in 2015 and sustained development in the future. This is a topic that is near to our heart.

We are convinced that demographic developments belong to the most pressing challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They have far-reaching consequences in many fields as they influence inclusive economic growth, migration and mobility, food security, the supply of drinking water, peace and security, and most importantly, sustainable development.

Demographic transition processes have important implications for government policies and programmes. It is not difficult to portray the challenges of a Ministry of Health, or a Ministry of Education, when dealing with the so called youth bulge – when a large proportion of the population is of young age.

As was clearly shown in the presentations by the Population Division on Monday and Professor Lam's keynote address of yesterday, demographic development is not an autonomous process, as is sometimes believed. An important factor influencing population dynamics, is of course fertility. To what extent are women and men, girls and boys able to make informed decisions about having children and their number and spacing; and do they have access to sexual and reproductive health information and services? There is clearly an enormous gap, with over 220 million women wanting to use modern contraceptives and not having access to contraception. Meeting this huge unmet need is our collective challenge.

As the ICPD Programme of Action underlines, human rights, population dynamics and sustainable development are intertwined. It helps us meeting the Millennium Development Goals and the future post 2015 development agenda. Population development planning requires the promotion of human rights, equity, equality and social justice.

We believe that to improve people's lives, it is important that all individuals, in particular adolescents and youth, have universal access to quality, comprehensive and integrated sexual and reproductive health information and services, and that modern contraceptives and safe and legal abortion are available. All legal and regulatory barriers that prevent individuals from accessing these services must be removed. Structural drivers of poverty should be addressed, such as inequality, stigma, discrimination and violence perpetuated against all individuals, including marginalized and vulnerable groups and including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Sustainable development can only be achieved if we leave no one behind.

To this end, the respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights, in particular sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, are crucial. The Netherlands remains committed to the full and effective implementation of the Cairo agenda and ICPD Beyond 2014, both in our international and national policies.

Thank you, chair.