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*Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

On behalf of the Republic of Poland I am honored to address the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development on ***Realizing the Future We Want: Integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the post-2015 development agenda.*** This session comes at a very challenging time, when the UN community works intensely on the new development agenda to be adopted at the **UN Post 2015 summit** in September 2015. The new development agenda has to be transformative, innovative, inclusive, universal and sustainable.

At the beginning, let me congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election as President of the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Population and Development, and other members of the Bureau on their election.

*Madam Chair,*

The ICPD Programme of Action constitutes a platform for the present and future activity for the Polish Government. The population-related issues remain at the core of development. Over the last 20 years, Poland has faced serious demographic problems, such as a low number of births, relatively high mortality rates compared with Western European countries and shorter life expectancy than the average in the European Union. According to the new forecasts of the Central Statistical Office, in 2030 the size of the population of Poland will have decreased by 1.3 million persons. Therefore, further negative changes in the age structure of the population and shortages on the labour market are to be expected. The forecast also points out the problem of stability of the social security system, which is further aggravated by mass economic migration of young Polish citizens undertaking the employment abroad, mainly in the EU countries. In 2014 the number of Poles abroad stood at 2.1 million which constitutes approx. 6% of the country's population, with the majority of them being in the mobile age (18-44years). The consequences of such significant population outflow in a short time are very complex and will most probably be noticeable in years to come.

To improve the situation, it is crucial to increase fertility rate of the population in Poland, including through the reduction of costs of bringing up children, ensuring better conditions for reconciling professional and family functions. It is also necessary to make a maximum use of available labour resources through pension reforms, additional measures to facilitate combining studies and work and making use of the potential of people at retirement age. Population policy requires long-term actions by the state, which enjoy wide public support, and an interdisciplinary approach.

The Polish Government, with the active role of the Government Population Council, has prepared strategic documents to address these challenges. The Expert Group prepared the assumptions of the action programme in the area of population policy ***Foundations of the Polish Population Policy***, which was subject to debate and assessment by the Government Population Council, and by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Demographic Congress, held in 2012 under the honorary patronage of the President of the Republic of Poland.

The process of ageing of the Polish population force to counteract the decrease in employment resulting from a shrinking population of working age, as well as adapt the structure of the economy to these challenges. In order to increase the employment of older people are taken initiatives aiming to enhance the capacity of people aged 50 years and older, such as: the adoption of a renewed ***Programme Solidarity generations. Measures to increase the activity of people***

**aged 50+** or amendment of the law on employment promotion and labour market institutions, which, among other things, established a National Training Fund (KFS) to subsidize the cost of lifelong learning for workers aged over 45 years. For social activation of older people and combating social exclusion, the Multiannual **Programme Senior-WIGOR** has been prepared.

*Distinguished Delegates,*

The issues of equality between women and men, and empowerment of women are important elements of the ICPD Programme of Action. In Poland, the equal status of women and men is guaranteed in the Constitution. The promotion and protection of human rights, especially women's rights in Poland is the priority for the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment and non-governmental organizations. Non-discriminatory legislation in Poland has been supplemented in the last decade with new legislative framework and international commitments.

Poland, like many other countries in the world, has been dedicated to combating violence. Promoting equality and empowering women to be independent and free in their choices should be the core of each national policy on combating violence.

Many initiatives and legislative decisions important for combating violence have been taken in Poland recently. Our achievement is the amendment of Penal Code and the change of the procedure of persecuting rape perpetrators into ex officio (till now everything has depended on the motion filed by the victim) as well as introducing new, safer interrogation procedures for rape victims. In December 2013 government adopted **National Action Plan on Equal Treatment 2013-2016**, in which counteracting gender based violence is an essential part. In recent years we have also been working intensely on empowering and supporting independence of women. We have changed the provisions of Labor Code, Family Code, and electoral ordinance.

*Madam Chair,*

The post-2015 era opens new chapter of possibilities and actions to accelerate and sustain development. The world faces many challenges, but sustainable development seems not to be achievable without proper integration of health into the all policies. Currently in Poland there is an ongoing debate on public health and its crucial role for economic and social development. New legal frames are being established, including the act on public health and National Health Program for the coming years. **The National Health Program (NHP) 2007-2015** focuses on establishment of principal health policy directions in the country and creates opportunities for more effective, multi-sectorial implementation of the tasks related to the health of society. The program refers, inter alia, to the strategic papers of the World Health Organization and the European Union programmes in the field of public health.

In Poland everyone has the right for health protection, all Polish citizens, regardless of their social or economic situation, have equal access to health care services financed by the public funds. The range of these services is defined by law.

A special State protection is ensured to women in the period of pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum. The protection is provided both in the national legislation as well as in the international agreements ratified by Poland. The public authorities are obliged to ensure special treatment to women in the period of pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum, also by ratified international law acts. Given the need to provide women during pregnancy and at labour with the best possible services, the Minister of Health issued the Regulation of 20 September 2010, on standards of conduct and

medical procedures in providing health services in the area of perinatal care for women during physiological pregnancy, physiological childbirth, and postpartum and of infant care. It also has to be stressed that trainings for physicians and midwives were held concerning the implementation of the perinatal care standards. A control of its implementation has also been commissioned.

The reproductive health is an important part of the State health policy. Central government authorities as well as local authorities provide citizens with a free access to methods and means of conscious procreation. Currently, in Poland there are modern contraceptives registered and accessible medical and medicinal products as well as drugs used during pregnancy and necessary for the fetus care or medical care for woman during pregnancy, and also used for the purpose of conscious procreation. In the last two decades, the range and availability of modern contraceptive methods have increased.

In the field of reproductive health, the *Programme of Infertility Treatment by In Vitro Fertilization for the period of 2013-2016*, it is aimed at ensuring couples with an identified male or female infertility an equal access to the in vitro fertilization, when all other methods of treatment failed or when other methods of treatment do not exist. The programme is open for couples in which women is under 40 years old. The significance of this project is based on the free-of-charge rule – so far method of infertility treatment was not financed from public funds.

The school teaching programmes include a subject called *Education for family life*. Its learning content guarantees pluralism of opinions. The attention given to the reproductive health and education is also reflected in data on pregnancy among minors. The number of births, when a mother was 19 years old or younger decreases systematically. In 2012 there were 15.791 such births, while in 2002 – 24.449.

Poland is a low HIV / AIDS prevalence country, with stable epidemiological situation. Since the beginning of the epidemic there have been about 19 thousand HIV infections detected in Poland. The number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the country is estimated at 30-35 thousand. All HIV positive patients, including these at risk of marginalization e.g. incarcerated or homeless people are covered by high efficacy ARV treatment program - as part of the national strategy on preventing HIV infections and combating AIDS - *The National Program for Preventing HIV Infections and Combating AIDS, 2012-2016*.

The Polish policy on HIV and AIDS is consistent with the recommendations and commitments contained in the ICPD Programme of Action as well as the objectives within the Millennium Development Goals, and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, have influenced the continuing progress in the field of public health. The indisputable example of this development is a holistic approach towards epidemic-related issues, reflected in unconditional accessibility to advanced ARV treatment, care and support services provided in our country. Since the very beginning, a free-of-charge services have been offered to people living with HIV in Poland.

Epidemiological studies clearly indicate the systematic improvement of the health status in Poland. There is a visible upward trend in the life expectancy, downward trend in overall mortality, as well as visible decline in infant mortality rates.

The maternal mortality rate together with the perinatal mortality rate as the principal indicators of society's cultural and civilizational development, constitute crucial indicators of society's state of health also in Poland. A positive trend that needs to be stressed, is a constant decrease in mortality among children between 1-14 years old. It is accompanied by the trend of decreasing infant mortality. Nonetheless, Poland's activities in the area of obstetric

care are still fundamentally aimed at steadily reducing maternal, newborn and infant mortality rates. It is mainly achieved through creating a three-stage perinatal care system that perform functions related to managing network of collaborating facilities, treating patients, providing consultations, ensuring the information flow, maintaining and coordinating transport of mothers and newborns, and educating.

*Distinguished Delegates,*

In order to improve the conditions for families, help parents achieve a better work-life balance and increase low fertility rate, the Polish government has adopted a series of measures since 2006, among them a one-time child birth grant. In June 2013 additional measures to support families came into force including: the extension of the *additional maternity leave* up to 6 weeks; the extension of *paternity leave* up to 2 weeks for father; the introduction of paid *parental leave* up to 26 weeks after using basic maternity leave and additional maternity leave. The parental leave could be used by both parents in the same time.

According to the Polish Labour Code, a person employed, for at least 6 months, is entitled to up to 36 months of *childcare leave* in order to provide personal care to a child under 5 years old. If a child is disabled – employee is entitled to additional period of childcare leave up to 36 months for a child under 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Childcare leave is generally unpaid, but the low-income families are entitled to a flat monthly payment.

**Young adults may qualify for government subsidy when buying their first home under in the *Housing for the Young Programme*. Families with three or more children may qualify for additional government support not only to pay loan installments, but also to earlier repay their loan.**

*Madam Chair,*

In the last quarter-century Poland has turned from the centrally planned economy to a market economy. It is a member of the WTO, NATO and OECD. It has gone through a process of integration within the EU structures, allowing the Poles to enjoy the freedoms that have been taken so far by the EU citizens. Additionally, the EU funds allow for the development of the Polish economic and social potential. The stabilization of the economy that has been achieved over a period of transformation has provided increased confidence in the economic policy of the state. Poland is one of the most attractive locations for investment, as evidenced by a number of international rankings of institutions. It is also a good indicator that shows how much we can gain when it comes to conducting business in Poland.

**The current level of the economic development in Poland points out the importance of smart growth as the main factor of building the competitive advantage. The innovation path and development based on knowledge, especially in view of the depletion of traditional sources of economic growth, provide an opportunity for the dynamic growth of the Polish economy. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out activities supporting innovation, including an increase in spending on research and development. The structure of the Polish economy and sustainable economic growth are its strength, which is a good premise for the development in the years to come. The prospects for the Polish economy are optimistic, but the dynamics of the further development depends on the global situation.**

*Distinguished Delegates,*

Poland has been implementing the policy *State ecological policy* of sustainable development since social and economic transformations. The role of climate policy is the Polish contribution to efforts of the international community for the protection of global climate through implementing sustainable development principles, and treating the issue of climate changes, energy, sustainable development and economies gradually shifting towards low-emission, as one common problem.

Poland attaches great significance to environmental protection activities both at the national and international level through the implementation of climate policy at the European level and on the global forum. Globally, a major challenge is the development of responsible climate policy which will effectively pursue objectives of sustainable development and reconcile them with development objectives (including the level of competitiveness of the economy). Energy issues will be the main challenge in this regard. Modernization, reconstruction and development of energy infrastructure is vital to ensure the conditions for stable development of the Polish economy. Poland aims to reduce primary energy consumption. Such limitation of consumption not only directly means reducing emission economy, but in terms of economic growth also means improving its energy efficiency. This effect is furtherly enhanced by the increase in the share of energy from renewable sources.

*Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Poland is at a crucial stage in its development. The aim should be to ensure that Poland would become a country where people are able to work together and take action together for the common good.

Poland is an excellent example as to how transformative and inclusive approach to population issues can mobilize all segments of society to determine the country's sustainable population and development strategy and its subsequent implementation.

Based upon our national experience we are strongly convinced that, for the sustainable development to be systemic and irreversible, it has to be based on good governance, the rule of law and observance of human rights. These aspects are essential for ensuring inclusive and equitable economic growth, and sustainable development.

Polish delegation firmly believes that in the inter-related and inter-dependent world it is necessary to discuss those issues and share the strategies that - based upon experience of our member states - are effective in solving the population problems. The results of our discussions may prove particularly useful prior to the adoption of the new development agenda. We are certain that the 48th session of the CPD provides unique opportunity for sharing interesting national experience and good practices that might be introduced in other countries. They can be useful in meeting the challenges relating to population issues.

Thank you for your attention