



**Republic of SURINAME**  
**Statement by H.E. Ms. Kitty Sweeb, Deputy Permanent Representative**  
**at the 50th Session of the Commission on Population and Development**  
**New York, 5 April 2017**

Thank you, Madam Chair,

Suriname associates itself with the statements made by El Salvador on behalf of CELAC and Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Suriname acknowledges the great development challenges that are related to changing population structures and the need to closely consider the impact that these demographic changes will have on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the sustainable development goals and targets.

At present, the proportion of the elderly in the Caribbean has been larger than ever before in the history of this region. In Suriname, the recent population census showed an increase of 29% in persons who are 60 years or older, which makes this age group the fastest growing population group. Its share in the general population grew from 8.6% in 2004 to 10.1% in 2012, which implies a fast growth of 1.5%. With this pattern of ageing in our country, similar to most countries in the Caribbean, we can be placed in a stage of moderate to advanced ageing. Ageing is taking place in a context of large economic challenges, changing intergenerational relations, fragile government institutions, and privatization of many services, including health services.

In view of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Charter of San José on the rights of older persons, Suriname started with the nationwide collection of data on the situation, needs and social determinants of healthy ageing in different contexts. These disaggregated data on the experiences of elderly will enable the development of an evidence based National Action Plan for Health of Older Persons. Together with all relevant stakeholders from civil society and private sector, this plan will contribute to a coordinated and integrated approach, in which a gender and human rights perspective is included, and that will be aimed at improving health and full integration and participation of older persons on all levels in society.

As in many developing countries, our current generation of young people is the largest in history, with more than half of the population under the age of 25 years. We believe that this growing population of youth offers the whole society a rare chance to gain a demographic dividend and break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. To make full use of the enormous potential of young people, we realize that it is critical to make

strategic investments in protecting our children and youth against the multiple problems many of them are facing every day.

Violence against children, sexual abuse, alcohol and drugs abuse, negative peer pressure, school drop out, involvement in criminal behavior, and HIV/STI are still major challenges that threaten our youth. Many of these problems are closely interconnected and related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender inequality and poverty.

Even when general fertility shows a significant decline, fertility among teenagers remained persistently high. Suriname has one of the highest adolescent rates in the Caribbean. Early childbearing among adolescent girls is disproportionately higher among the most disadvantaged women. Adolescent fertility strongly impacts negatively on the opportunities of girls and women to advance in the education and employment sectors, and therefore also jeopardizes their children's future. We believe that it is a key determinant in the intergenerational transmission of poverty and reproduction of gender inequality.

With respect to youth, the government of Suriname is making efforts to put legislation, policies and programs in place to enable participation and enhance health of youth. Some of the measurements are: the establishment of a separate Ministry of Youth and Sports, further revision of the marriage legislation with a minimum age for marriage to 18 years for both boys and girls, in accordance with CRC. Adjustments have also been made to the Penal Code in order to increase protection of children against sexual violence, and in all sectors capacity strengthening of service providers is taking place in order to increase youth friendly services.

To enable nationwide regular collection of disaggregated data, offices for civil registration have been expanded to ensure collection of civil registry and vital statistics, including in remote areas.

Our government is committed to policies and programs on issues such as adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and ageing, and in this way linking the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) with the 2030 Agenda.

The changing population structure, in particular the growing and diverse populations of youth and elderly, calls for the development of a constructive and holistic approach and development of social protection policy to ensure both elderly and young people's access to development, including education, employment and participation.

Madam Chair,

Suriname reiterates its commitment to the PoA of ICPD, to the Beijing Platform for Action, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development and its Operational Guide, and to the regional outcome document of the Regional Conference on Population and Development held in México City in 2015. Thank you.