

## Draft CPD56 national statement

### Bulgaria

Mr. Chair,

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made by Argentina on behalf of a group of like-minded countries. Following are some additional remarks of importance to my country.

Mr. Chair, **the CPD is the only UN intergovernmental forum mandated** to discuss the ICPD Programme of Action and the full extent of population and development issues. In this regard, adopting a negotiated outcome this year on the special theme of population, education and sustainable development, especially in the context of accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels and the forthcoming 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ICPD **is of particular importance**.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of its review conferences emphasized **the crucial role of universal access to quality education** in achieving sustainable development and realizing human rights. Bulgaria firmly believes in the power of education to transform societies, to make them more resilient to demographic change, revealing the interlinkages with gender equality and the empowerment of women, human capital formation, economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Bulgaria has been an active partner of UNFPA and UNESCO in different fields including the field of education and its transformation process in recent years. Bulgaria has financed projects in the field of STEM education for girls and women in sub-Saharan Africa and of education about the Holocaust raising awareness against antisemitism. Thus, we have contributed to establishing more inclusive and just societies in line with the SDG-4.

Our longstanding priorities on national level include life-long learning, green education, quality digital education, among others. We truly believe that developing quality digital education is an investment with huge positive social impact. Bulgaria has already started to improve its national digital learning platforms, that are free and accessible at all education levels. And we hope we could share our positive results with other interested countries and partners.

Bulgaria also recognizes that education is a critical driver of **gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment**. We value the Transforming Education Summit and its Call to Action on Advancing gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment in and through education. It is simply wrong that millions of women and girls are still denied access to quality education thus preventing them from achieving their full potential, including as agents of change – both socially and economically, which is detrimental for the development of their societies.

Mr. Chair,

As evidence shows, education is even more beneficial when children and adolescents have access to **comprehensive sexuality education**, provided by trained teachers, based on a formal curriculum, and implemented in partnership with learners, parents, and communities. It is crucial to equip adolescents and young people with a necessary toolkit of knowledge, attitudes and skills which will allow them to exercise full bodily autonomy, develop relationships based on respect, protect them from coercion, sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies and help them to realize their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Hailing from Eastern Europe, a region marked by low fertility, population ageing, complex migration movements, my country recognizes the need to **invest in human capital**, to meet demographic challenges, to develop quality education for all, to create an enabling environment for young people, women, children and the most vulnerable groups, leaving no one behind and reach furthest behind first, thus bringing stability and prosperity for all.

It is in this context that we cherish The Decade of Demographic Resilience that was launched in 2021 at a Conference that was hosted by Bulgaria in collaboration with UNFPA. We strongly believe that our common efforts will contribute to strengthening the capacity of countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia to respond to the profound demographic shifts the region is experiencing. We trust that the results from the Conference will serve as an impetus to turn the demographic challenges into opportunities to do more and better.

In **conclusion**, Mr. Chair, let me reiterate that Bulgaria remains fully committed to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Program of Action of the ICPD and the outcomes of their review conferences as well as the commitments from the Nairobi Summit held in 2019. We will continue to partner with the UNFPA which we believe has all the right tools to continue its powerful advocacy to advance the sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda, to address population dynamics, and to empower youth, as well as to achieve its commitment to delivering transformative results in both development and humanitarian settings to end the unmet need for contraception, end preventable maternal deaths and end gender-based violence in all its forms.

Thank you!