



Commission on Population and Development 56
(10-14 April 2023)
Oral statement

Over the next three decades, global population growth is expected to occur almost exclusively in the world's cities.

As SDG 11 states, to accommodate everyone we need new urban planning that creates safe, affordable and resilient cities.

Migration is a key source of the growth of cities; fifty percent of forcibly displaced people live in urban areas, driven by conflict, climate change, poverty, and human rights violations.

Cities are on the front lines of finding workable solutions to provide housing, education, secure employment, healthcare, including mental health.

Too many children in the world live in poor urban settlements, and are growing up in conditions that challenge their resilience and that can consign them to life long poverty.

For migrant and refugee children the situation is even more adverse; they are deprived of many of rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child; they struggle to integrate and are at risk of violence, exploitation and forced child labor.

In childhood, the youngest (from birth to 3) are especially vulnerable. In the early years the brain experiences its fastest development. Adverse early environments can lead to "toxic stress" with long-term implications for cognitive, behavioral, and psychosocial physical development and increasing social costs.

Disaggregated data on this age group is lacking.

According to science Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is particularly beneficial for children living in vulnerable situations, protecting them against the detrimental effects of early adversity and their rights' violations. ECEC can break the cycle of poverty and is critical to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals



(SDGs). Investing in ECEC is the most powerful investment a country and a city can make in their most valuable resource: children and families. Their voices must be heard, and their recommendations respected. The scarcity of ECEC programs and their high privatization stress great inequalities and injustice. Prevention and social protection are critical for the development of children.

It is time for decision-makers to take seriously the commitments made on the 2030 Agenda, focusing on SDG 4.2, on the CRC, on what science says and increase funds promoting an inclusive, equitable and quality approach for all children and their families. If we want cities that "work" and that are green, resilient and inclusive, the time to act is now, betting from the starting of each human life.