

Input into the reflections on the future of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD)

31st of July 2020

1. Given that the Commission is the only intergovernmental forum focused on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in the United Nations, **how can we improve its work** to better assist Member States and the international community at large in advancing the ICPD agenda while contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?
 - Belgium(BE) invites CPD to assist Member States by aiming for short and action-oriented resolutions that assist the Member States in advancing the implementation of the ICPD Program of Action;
2. Population and development issues and trends, including drivers and impacts, have important implications for the further implementation of the Programme of Action and the achievement of the SDGs. **What role can the Commission play** in guiding Member States and the international community in responding to these issues and trends?
 - Belgium(BE) considers CPD to remain an essential UN Commission. As stated by the secretariat, however, the "inability of the Commission to reach consensus on the outcome document in 2015, 2017, 2018 and again in 2020 makes such a reflection both timely and necessary."
 - We value the role of CPD to provide the needed updates on global trends as well on the progress of ICPD; We invite the SG report to aim for coherence and complementarity between the expert reports of DESA et UNFPA.
 - We support the CPD secretariats efforts for evidence-based discussions and recommendations, and calls for strengthening dialogue with UN and other expert agencies and networks in the field of population and development.
3. In order to address the above questions and issues, would it be desirable or feasible for the Commission to adjust its **methods of work** (organizational aspects, substantive elements, outcome)? If so, could the practices and experiences of other subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) provide any guidance?

The CPD methods of work could be strengthened.

On organizational aspects:

- We welcome CPD efforts – via the annual theme and expert panels – to reach out to emerging themes and topics. We appreciate the current practice of deciding on its annual theme two years in advance (as opposed to four years in advance as proposed).
- We welcome CPD to allow for emerging themes to be added and allow for more interlinkages between ICPD and the SDS. We invite CPD nevertheless to keep a focus of the annual theme related to the specific areas of the ICPD PoA, and to aim for specific and action-oriented recommendations.
- The use of expert panels as suggested by CPD is appreciated as a mean to provide evidence-based data and analysis. We appreciate for example the role of WHO HRP (the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction) to provide the Commission leading research in sexual and reproductive health and rights; We also appreciate the recent panel that prepared the 2020/2021 theme of nutrition and population and development, in cooperation with FAO and related experts.

- We support the Commission 'to give due consideration to the role of civil society in organizing its annual sessions'. We welcome CPD efforts to increase the participation of civil society representatives of least-developed countries - LDCs with particular attention for women and for vulnerable groups. We invite CPD to engage in a dialogue with civil society on how they can best contribute to the Commission's work.

On the outcome / decision-making process:

- Based on the experience of the Belgian chairmanship of CPD in 2015, and participating at recent CPDs, we acknowledge the challenges of dealing with the inability to reach an outcome resolution. We remain however supportive of efforts to reach a consensus.
- We are concerned about the 'disconnect' between the plenary and the informal discussions, and by the polarisation of negotiations during the informals. We suggest to avoid parallel sessions of the plenary debate and the informals to allow delegations to participate in both.
- We are not convinced at this stage that opting for a vote on a resolution will provide a better outcome. In the case of the inability to reach a consensus we are in favour for the chair to issue a Chair summary capturing the whole of Commission debates, including the diversity of opinions.
- CPD can also consider 'spacing' the adoption (ex. bi-annually) of a resolution, and hence provide more time for Member States at the Commission to gather evidence, exchange views and potentially reach consensus more easily.