

Holy See Mission to the United Nations
Explanation of Position on the resolution
“Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development” (E.CN.9/2016/L.5)

49th Session of the Commission on Population and Development

New York, 15 April 2016

Madame Chair,

My delegation would like to thank you, the Bureau and the Secretariat, and particularly our co-facilitators for the hard work together with delegations on the outcome document.

My delegation is convinced that only a truly human-centered approach to development can function as the authentic starting point for policy on population and development. Through its vast global network of institutions, the Holy See is committed to serving the poorest and most vulnerable among us and to achieving the integral human development of all. This includes physical, social, and spiritual development – focusing on the most essential factors for development, including: quality and affordable education and health care, access to food and nutrition, water and sanitation, the rights of migrants, as well as policies that support the family as the fundamental and most basic contributors of this development.

While we recognize the importance of strong demographic evidence in the achievement of these ends and in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, we regret that the vast majority of our discussions as well as the resulting resolution adopted with this original purpose, did not focus on demographic evidence but rather on a number of controversial issues and selected rights instead of the real development priorities consistently elaborated by the majority of delegations present.

In this regard, the Holy See, in conformity with its nature and particular mission, wishes to express its position on some of the concepts used therein:

1. Regarding the terms “sexual and reproductive health”, “sexual and reproductive health-care services”, and “reproductive rights”, the Holy See considers these terms as applying to a holistic concept of health. These terms embrace, each in their own way, the person in the entirety of his or her personality, mind and body. They should also be understood to

foster the achievement of personal maturity in sexuality and in the mutual love and decision-making that characterize the conjugal relationship between a man and a woman in accordance with moral norms. The Holy See does not consider abortion, access to abortion, or access to abortifacients as a dimension of these terms.

2. In addition, the Holy See reiterates its statement and reservations as set out clearly and more fully in the Report of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, and the Report of the 1995 Fourth World Conference and their respective follow-up Conferences. In particular, my delegation understands, in accordance with the ICPD 1.15, that no new rights or human rights are created, that recourse to abortion may never be considered as family planning (7.24), that abortion is a matter to be determined in accordance with national legislation (8.25).
3. With reference to "gender" and to related terms, the Holy See understands these terms to be grounded in the biological sexual identity and difference that is male or female.
4. With respect to "education" or "information" on "sexuality", or the collection of data from children, youth and adolescents in this regard, the Holy See reiterates the "primary responsibility" and the "prior rights" of parents, including their right to religious freedom, when it comes to the education, protection and upbringing of their children, as enshrined, inter alia, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In that sense, the Holy See wishes to underline the centrality of the family, "the natural and fundamental group unit of society," as well as the role and rights and duties of parents to educate their children.

In this regard, the Holy See requests that its reservations on paragraphs PP 18, 19 and OP 7 and 24 to be formally entered into the record of this meeting.

Thank you Madam Chair