



CROATIA

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Agenda Item 4.

General debate on national experience in population
matters: health, morbidity, mortality and development

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Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset allow me to thank the Secretary-General for preparing the three comprehensive reports, which provide us with a broad overview of the multiple challenges arising from the numerous interactions between health and development.

Particularly this year, and in the light of the upcoming High-Level Plenary Meeting of the 65th session of the General Assembly, the Croatian delegation is assured that priority will be given to health-related Millennium Development Goals, as a foundation for overall human, social and economic development.

The United Nations also recently commemorated the 15th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in the General Assembly, as well as in other forums such as the Regional Forum in Istanbul, jointly organized by the UN Economic Commission for Europe, the UN Population Fund with partner organizations, and hosted by the Government of Turkey. This Forum provided an excellent opportunity to take stock of accomplishments to date and identify necessary future actions in order to accelerate progress in implementing the goals of the ICPD Program of Action for the next five years and beyond.

Mr. Chairperson,

In aligning itself with the statement previously delivered by the European Union, Croatia would like to use this opportunity to briefly highlight some national perspectives and activities taking place in health, population and development issues.

High among public health priorities in Croatia are addressing chronic non-communicable diseases alongside efforts towards strengthening prevention. In this regard programs with a special focus on promoting health are being continually run. As in the rest of Europe, diseases within this category represent the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in Croatia, with cardiovascular diseases at the helm responsible for 50.3% of the national mortality rate. They are also the second most frequent cause of hospitalization, after neoplasms, and come second according to registered morbidity rates in general medicine.

Malignant diseases represent the second largest category of causes of death amounting to 25% of the national mortality rate, but gives rise to the largest number of hospitalization cases. Among malignant diseases in the mortality structure of women of fertile age, the most frequent is breast cancer. Consequently, public health care in Croatia continues to focus its attention on prevention programs. In this respect, there are several ongoing national campaigns aimed at early detection of malignant diseases, such as a national programmes for early detection and screening of breast cancer and colorectal cancer respectively, as well as public awareness raising efforts as to skin cancer.

The health of specific groups within the Croatian population with female reproductive health and maternity health at the forefront, is another priority of our national health policies, especially pursuant to the Croatian Population Policy. Croatia has enjoyed the advantage of a consistently low maternal mortality rate for several years, with cases of such occurring only on

an exceptional basis. This has been achieved and continues to be maintained through existing antenatal and postnatal care mechanisms centered on protection standards. Despite this, there are still approximately 10% of pregnancies that are insufficiently supervised. Of particular importance for Croatia in trying to address this problem, is the appropriate provision of family planning and reproductive health education, especially for adolescent school students and pregnant women.

For Croatia, the legal basis for safe motherhood has been defined through various governmental sectors, and through national implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly MDGs 4 and 5, as well as in embracing the ICPD recommendations. Evident progress has been made in the realms of occupational and legislative protection, which ensures both mandatory and additional voluntary maternity leave for a minimum 6 months. Furthermore, working mothers are entitled to breastfeeding breaks, and women's health care is fully covered by the country's mandatory health insurance system.

Healthcare for infants and small children are also fully covered by the mandatory health insurance system. In 2006, the Croatian Government adopted the National Plan of Activities for the Rights and Interests of Children, for the period 2006-2012. Its main objective is to promote child health by ensuring every child proper growth and development in all respects health-wise, namely physical, mental, emotional, social and educational. It further aims at reducing mortality rates caused by injury and other preventable causes, as well as ensuring an equal health standard for all children living in Croatia.

Mr. Chairperson,

The strengthening of a health system equates to the availability of an adequate workforce. The Croatian National Health Strategy 2006-2011 points out that the increasing number of physicians and nurses per capita, should be further accelerated in order to bring Croatia closer to the EU average. In addition to defining minimum personnel needs, it is also important to continue providing education at all levels and in line with EU standards. Accordingly, pursuant to Croatia's National Health Strategy, policies on health personnel and their education have been incorporated into several programs and projects conducted by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. .

To conclude Mr. Chairperson,

Croatia will remain fully committed to continuously monitoring further implementation and incorporation of the ICPD Agenda within its national health policies, strategies, programs and budgets. We perceive this to be a fundamental precondition to enable us to achieve important and imperative goals established at relevant international conference for human, social and economic development, first and foremost the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you.