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## 44ème session de la Commission de la population et du développement

Point 4 de l'ordre du jour

### **Débat général consacré à l'expérience des pays dans le domaine de la population : fécondité, santé procréative et développement.**

**General debate on national experience in population matters:  
fertility, reproductive health and development.**

New York, le 11 avril 2011

Déclaration de la Suisse

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Mr President,

Sixteen years ago, the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development changed the paradigm from a focus on demographic targets to one which places human rights at the centre of population and development. Since ICPD, the connection between sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and human rights has been recognized to underlie other major development challenges including poverty, discrimination, and inequality.

Today, because of our collective commitment to the vision put forth at ICPD and in subsequent international consensus resolutions, considerable progress has been made to increase universal access to sexual and reproductive health. Switzerland congratulates the Secretary General for his excellent reports that succinctly raise many of the remaining challenges before us:

First, fertility has declined unevenly. Where progress was made, health, education and economic indicators improved. However, fertility declines were most pronounced in the wealthier population segments that accessed and utilised family planning more than the poor. Despite universal recognition that all couples and individuals should have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of children, and have the information, education and means to do so, there remains a considerable unmet need for family planning.

Second, reaching the most vulnerable, poor, and disadvantaged members of our communities requires concerted efforts. Switzerland welcomes the call on governments to be proactive in ensuring that the reproductive and sexual rights of all individuals be respected, protected and fulfilled by member states. Only through human rights-based approaches working at multiple levels and sectors can we ensure that all people – especially women and adolescents – get the information, education, counseling and services they need equally, appropriately, and without discrimination.

Third, for renewed commitments to be effective, sexual and reproductive health care services must be integrated as part of the primary health care package. Prevention, treatment and care for people living with HIV/AIDS must be integrated into the essential services package to simultaneously promote health, human rights and development.

Fourth, the provision of these services requires targeted investment in health systems and removal of systemic barriers such as excessive user fees that severely limit access to essential services, particularly for the poor as well as the most vulnerable and marginalized members of the population. Universal coverage for primary health care continues to be an urgent priority that has yet to be achieved.

Mr. President, in Switzerland, as in most other European countries, fertility is low, women delay childbearing until their early 30s on average when they start childbearing, and the population is aging. Over the last century we have experienced pronounced declines in maternal, infant and child mortality due to increased access to contraception, and the modern medical care we are so privileged to benefit from. Despite the successes, there are continuing challenges. In Switzerland where access to family planning and health care is guaranteed by law, social and financial, barriers still impede utilization of some services by our most vulnerable populations. The poor and disenfranchised are most in need but least likely to access and seek the services they need. This results particularly in increased morbidity, unplanned pregnancies and high rates of abortion among young migrant women and undocumented women workers.

We see similar challenges elsewhere. In developing countries where the Swiss Development Cooperation is active, patterns of discrimination and under-utilisation of essential sexual and reproductive health care services are found. Working with partners in countries, the Swiss Development Cooperation is committed to contributing to the reduction of barriers to care for the most vulnerable members of society. By working with communities and by utilizing culturally adapted strategies and modern technologies, individuals, families and entire communities can be supported to achieve significant health improvements. By empowering disadvantaged groups to play a more active role in the design and implementation of policies and programmes, institutionalized discrimination can begin to be tackled.

Switzerland recognizes however that working with communities alone is not sufficient to overcome the systemic barriers found in many countries. Health system constraints in human resources, infrastructure, health commodities including essential drugs, logistics and financing require sustained support through long-term efforts to strengthen health systems. Employing "systems thinking" to expand access to integrated quality essential services particularly at primary care level is therefore a priority of the Swiss Development Cooperation.

Switzerland also considers that the low status of women in many countries contributes to high fertility and poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes. It is a major reason why the MDG related to maternal health is today more off-target than the other MDGs, despite multiple global calls for action. Gender inequality and gender-based discrimination continues to limit access to and utilization of services. In many countries, women lack the autonomy and decision making power to make choices about their reproductive lives and to control their fertility. Switzerland is convinced that achieving the promise of ICPD and the Millennium Development goals will require not only greater political commitment to sexual and reproductive health, but also greater political attention to women empowerment and reduction of gender inequality.

Mr President, recognizing that many countries will not have met all the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action by 2014, Switzerland welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to convene a special session during its sixty-ninth session, to further assess the status of implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. The solutions to the problems identified long ago are well known. The international community now needs to redouble and accelerate its efforts to translate agreed policies into action.

Thank you for your attention.

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