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**General Statement on behalf of the European Union  
and its Member States**

**By**

**H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi  
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**at the 44th Session of the Commission on Population and Development**

**Agenda Item 5**

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**(Check against delivery)**

Mr. President,

On behalf of the European Union I am honoured to address on the forty-fourth session of the Commission on Population and Development.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia<sup>1</sup>, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union welcomes Resolution 65/234 of the General Assembly in which the Assembly decided to extend the ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation beyond 2014, and remains fully committed to achieving the goals of the Programme of Action and the further implementation of its key actions for as well as those of the Beijing Platform of Action and the Copenhagen Action Plan.

The International Conference on Population Development held in Cairo in 1994 was a groundbreaking event. Placing human rights and the individuals and communities at the center of population and development issues represented a paradigm shift in development policy. The ICPD was historic in shifting the population debate away from a top down approach focused on human numbers to a bottom up approach focused on the right of women and men to decide freely on matters relating to their reproduction. As stated in the ICPD Programme of Action there is a the right for all couples and individuals to ~~decide~~ freely and responsibly ~~the number,~~ spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and that there is also a right for all couples and individuals to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health and to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence.

The Cairo Conference and the implementation of its Programme of Action has helped us to better understand how not only States, but all components of society - women and men, young and old, urbans and rurals, governments, civil society and other actors – must work together to reduce poverty and inequalities, and to promote sustainable development, human rights for all, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Mr President,

The European Union has consistently been a strong supporter of the implementation and full implementation of the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions for its

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<sup>1</sup> *Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

further implementation. Considerable progress has been made since the Cairo Conference 17 years ago. Fertility has declined markedly worldwide, and the rate of growth of the human population has slowed down. In the 17 years since Cairo, the strong link between reduced fertility and positive development outcomes, both at the individual and collective levels, has become ever more evident: where fertility diminishes, so does poverty, and vice-versa. We have seen the decline of maternal death and child mortality, while at the same time women's access to education, health care and employment has improved in many parts of the world. The recent establishment of UN Women signifies advancements in gender equality as well as a collective willingness to intensify efforts towards further progress not only internationally but also at country level. Moreover, research and improved data collection have broadened our knowledge, international and internal migration and urbanisation have received growing attention and partnerships with civil society and non-governmental organizations have improved. Important strides have also been made in combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Mr President,

Despite considerable progress made, however, we should not rest on our laurels. The ICPD Programme of Action remains as relevant as ever. At the same time, poverty remains one of our greatest concerns, with recent global financial, economic and food crises continuing to have negative repercussions around the globe. Inequalities both between and within countries persist. Maternal and child deaths in many parts of the world remain unacceptably high despite our increased knowledge on how to prevent them. More than 60 million women give birth each year without antenatal delivery and newborn care. Progress towards gender equality and universal access to education and health including reproductive health and health care remain vital. Approximately 215 million women in the developing world have an unmet need for modern contraception. And the largest generation of adolescents ever in history is now entering sexual and reproductive life and their access to sexual and reproductive health information, education, reproductive health care services and commodities, including male and female condoms, is essential to achieving the goals (as set out in) Cairo 16 years ago, as well as fight against HIV/AIDS. (CPD EU statement 2009. para 7). In spite of the slowdown in population growth, this year the number of human beings on the planet will probably hit the 7 billion mark, and it will continue to rise at least until 2050, and even beyond, as large areas of the world have not yet experienced the demographic transition. Welcome increases in development also mean that the pressure of the human population on the global natural resources is still very much growing, posing the fundamental challenge of the sustainability of development.

As we approach major events in which the international community will look back upon the achievements in development in the last decades, and set new objectives for itself – the UNCSD in Rio in 2012, and the year 2015 for the Millennium Development Goals – we need to reaffirm the essential contribution that the ICPD and its fundamental goals and objectives have made, and continue to make, to global development. In this context, the European Union is looking

forward to the Special Session to be held during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly to assess the status of implementation of the Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation and to renew political support for actions required for the full achievement of its goals and objectives – as required by GA resolution 65/234. We will engage constructively and actively as we approach this important CPD Session. Ensuring the full participation and involvement of civil society, including poor and marginalized populations as well as young people, in the preparations at ICPD@20 and at the Special Session will be an important component both in the preparation and the special session. Let us all work together to make this Special Session the dynamic expression of our renewed commitment to the ICPD.

Thank you for your attention.