

UN Commission on Population and Development

Statement by the United States

Agenda Item 6:

General Debate on the Contribution of Population and Development Issues to the Theme of the Annual Ministerial Review

April 14, 2011

At the 2010 Commission on Population and Development, member states reaffirmed the ICPD Program of Action without qualification, and provided clarity to important commitments. The United States was particularly pleased with the document's focus on youth, education and services. Many developing countries, including those struggling to meet their Millennium Development Goal commitments, are grappling with unprecedented growth in their youth populations.

We know that the provision of voluntary family planning options for women provides benefits beyond just the individual. When women can plan their families, it allows them to also plan for other aspects of their life, including the education, economic opportunities and improved well being of their families.

It is widely known and accepted that family planning increases educational prospects for women. Those who begin childbearing before age 20 are less likely to finish school than those who wait even a few years. Early and frequent childbearing often limit women's education, which in turn compromises their capacity for earning. Women with as little as two or three years of formal schooling are significantly more likely to use reliable family planning methods than women with no formal education.

We know that educating girls is the single most effective development investment that can be made, and a key driver of economic growth and social progress—yielding positive outcomes for the future in terms of delayed marriage and childbirth, reduced maternal mortality, healthier pregnancies and thriving families. Children of educated mothers are more likely to survive, have adequate nutrition, and are more likely to attend school themselves. Girls' education also boosts income later in life: an extra year of primary school increases girls' future wages by an estimated 10-20 percent and an extra year of secondary education increases future wages by 15-25 percent.

The world's growing youth population needs jobs and training. While the youth bulge offers a potential demographic dividend—a temporary surge in the proportion of working-age adults that can boost economic growth—there are many challenges to reaping this windfall. Whether these young people become healthy and productive members of their societies will depend on how well governments and civil societies invest in social, economic, and political institutions that meet their needs.

The United States appreciates the work of the Commission on collecting and analyzing data in this area and remains committed, along with other Members, to supporting population, development and education activities. We look forward to learning more about the progress on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education at the upcoming ministerial review.

Thank you.