

The Holy See's Explanation of Position
Commission on Population and Development
44th Session, New York, 11-15 April 2011

1. My Delegation has taken note of the attention paid in the text to complications arising from all abortions, including the so-called “safe” and “unsafe” abortions. This acknowledgement buttresses the common sense understanding that abortion is harmful for both the mother and unborn child. In this regard, my delegation reiterates that there is no such thing as a “safe abortion.” Moreover, parents should oppose destructive practices and influences, especially recourse to abortions, in order to protect the life of their children, and to strive for optimal health and well being for their children, themselves and their family.
2. My delegation welcomes the attention focused on perhaps the greatest form of discrimination against girls, namely, prenatal sex selection leading to abortion, both legal and illegal, and the tragic consequences of prostitution, pornography and human trafficking flowing from this “missing girl” phenomenon.
3. My delegation is disappointed that some delegations rebuffed efforts by many others to acknowledge specifically the principle that the human person is at the center of development, repeatedly emphasized in principles 1-3 of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Unfortunately, as it stands, the general tenor of the present text reflects the false premise that population growth is the cause of poverty, concluding, therefore, that in order to reduce poverty one must eliminate poor people directly or otherwise radically reduce their numbers. In this regard, my delegation reaffirms that population control policies of any kind, be they supported by racial biases, ideological positions or economic profit, have no place in authentic development.
4. For development to be truly sustainable it has to be authentically human development, i.e., the integral development of each human in the totality of his or her humanity, both material and spiritual, and directed towards the common good. My delegation strongly reaffirms that the human person is at the heart of socio-economic development, due in part to his or her creativity and contributions. True and enduring socio-economic development is possible only when authentic human capital is created through full respect of human life coupled with long term investment in nutritional food, clean water,

adequate shelter, sanitation, basic healthcare, education and training. There is not only one mouth to feed, but two hands to help!

5. It necessarily follows that the family should occupy a central place in socio-economic development. My delegation relies on common sense and international law, which acknowledge that the family, founded on marriage, between one man and one woman, is the natural and fundamental unit of society entitled to protection by society and the State (*UDHR*, Art. 16). My delegation is therefore concerned that some delegations, over the voices of many others, rejected references to the “family” as well as “mothers and fathers” in relation to care-giving for children. The family is the first context in which children learn certain skills, attitudes and virtues which prepare them for adulthood and the labor force and thus allow them to contribute to economic growth and social development. The family is where human, moral and social capital become a reality. My delegation, along with many others, made proposals for increased attention to socio-economic support for the family, especially those in most need due, for example, to natural disasters. It is telling that priority actions in such humanitarian situations appear to be linked to the distribution of contraceptives perhaps over and above clean water, food, clothing, shelter and basic medical care.
6. The Holy See applauds reference to rights, duties and responsibilities of parents in regard to the education of adolescents on sexual and procreative matters. My delegation interprets all other provisions with references to children, for example, “girls,” “boys,” “adolescents” and “young people” - defined as young as 10 years of age by some UN agencies - in reference to the rights and duties of parents. Parents have the primary responsibility, right and duty to educate their children, including in the religious, moral and spiritual dimensions of authentic human love and related matters concerning the nature of sexuality, marriage and the family. This primordial parental right and duty has been recognized and reaffirmed in international law (cf., *UDHR*, Art. 26.3; *ICCPR*, Art. 18.4; *CRC*, Arts. 3.2, 5, 14.2).
7. The Holy See rejects all efforts to promote cultural changes that impose a selfish ethic or a socially constructed and sterile lifestyle. Such thinking appears evident where the text refers to “comprehensive education on human sexuality, on sexual and reproductive health, on gender equality and on... sexuality” for children, especially girls. This language is not agreed upon in international law and was recently denounced by many States when the Special Rapporteur on Education introduced such language in his Report in 2010 (A/65/162). In addition, such educational programs might have the effect, if not the intent, of sexualizing children by encouraging them to view their sexual identity, and that of others, as indefinitely malleable to suit new

and different purposes. This has no place in international law and calls into question the very foundation of human rights, based as it is on the inherent dignity of the human person, male and female (*UDHR*, preamble para. 5, Arts.1, 16).

8. With respect to the terms “gender,” “gender equality,” “gender sensitive”, “gender stereotypes” and “gender perspectives,” the Holy See reaffirms its past reservations, and in particular its Statement at the 55th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.
 9. My delegation reiterates all the reservations it has made on past occasions with regard to the terms "sexual and reproductive health," “sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights,” “reproductive health,” “health-care services” and "services": namely, that we do not consider contraception or abortion or abortion services to be a dimension of such terms. The Holy See considers the above terms as applying to a holistic concept of health which embraces the person in the entirety of his or her personality, mind and body, and which fosters the achievement of personal maturity in sexuality and in the mutual love and decision-making that characterize the marital relationship between one man and one woman in accordance with moral norms based on natural law.
 10. The Holy See reaffirms its position with regard to the terms “family planning” or “family planning services.” My delegation does not consider contraception or abortion or abortion services to be a dimension of such terms and does not endorse contraception or the use of condoms, either as a family planning measure or in HIV and AIDS prevention programmes.
 11. The Holy See welcomes the reference to abstinence and fidelity in the document. My delegation emphasizes that more attention and resources be dedicated to support the aforementioned value-based approach grounded in the inherent dignity of the human person, endowed with reason and conscience and called to act towards others in a spirit of brotherhood (*UDHR*, Art. 1).
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