



13 April 2015, New York

48th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development

Agenda item 4: General debate on national experience in population matters: realizing the future we want - integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the post-2015 development agenda

Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

Madam Chair, Under Secretary General, Ministers, Your Excellences, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland⁺, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The full version of my statement will be available on the websites of the CPD and of the EU

The EU and its Member States welcome this opportunity to address the Commission, and would like to thank the Bureau, under the able leadership of the PR of Belgium, Ambassador Bénédicte Frankinet, as well as UNDESA and UNFPA for the preparatory work carried out in advance of this session.

We welcome the theme of this session which could not be more timely, halfway between the historical **Special Session of the General Assembly on the ICPD beyond 2014** in September 2014, that galvanized the political momentum on key issues of population and development, and the **Post 2015 summit** in September 2015, that should provide an ambitious and transformative agenda, which leaves no-one behind, especially not women and girls.

Since its adoption in 1994 the Programme of Action of the ICPD has had an enormous impact by **placing human rights at the heart of development**. Ending discrimination and mainstreaming human rights for

* *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

⁺ *Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.*

all, including for women and girls, is an absolute necessity for the achievement of sustainable development and poverty eradication, as it was demonstrated by the Global Review that was presented to the GA Special Session, and which provides the **framework for actions for the follow up to the Programme of Action beyond 2014 and the steps for its further implementation**, including through the post 2015 development agenda.

Madam Chair,

The EU and its Member States reiterate that **the empowerment and human rights of women and girls, and ending both discrimination in all its forms and violence against women and girls, must be at the core of the post-2015 agenda**. We remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the outcomes of their review conferences and, in this context, sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We have to accelerate progress on the unfinished MDG-agenda, in particular on **maternal health and universal access to reproductive health**. We should also focus on young people's needs, including increasing their access to sexual and reproductive health information, education, reproductive health care services and commodities, including to quality modern methods of contraception. We are concerned about the slow progress made in this area; whether on maternal mortality and morbidity or access to modern contraceptives, hindering women's and couples' ability to exercise their right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and timing of children.

We cannot stress enough the inter-linkages between **population dynamics, women's empowerment and women's and girls' education, including their comprehensive sexuality education**. In this regard, we are concerned about the millions of young people, especially girls, who still lack access to high-quality education, including secondary and tertiary level education and who will consequently not be able to reach their full potential.

Madam Chair, we firmly believe that all people are entitled to a life free from violence and discrimination on any grounds, including on the basis of sex, gender, age, marital status, health status including HIV status, disability, or sexual orientation and gender identity. **Human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls** are imperative for attaining sustainable development and poverty eradication

Women must have access to resources on equal terms with men. Women must also have a stronger voice and power at all levels and in all spheres of society. Strong legislation and law enforcement to secure women's and girls' rights is not only a State obligation but a preconditions for empowering women and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, including female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.

Madam Chair,

Population dynamics, including uneven population growth, ageing, urbanization and migration constitute, against the background of persisting inequalities, important developmental challenges and opportunities for all three pillars of sustainable development.

The emergence of **age groups with critical needs** has to be recognized, in particular **youth and elderly people**, which both pose different challenges and opportunities to different countries. The particular challenges of **people with disabilities** also need to be taken into account.

The EU is paying increasing attention to the links between **migration and development** and considers migration both a significant factor contributing to progress towards several MDGs and a key dimension of global population dynamics, with clear impacts on gender equality and access to basic services such as education and healthcare.

Sustainable urbanization and city planning, the elimination of slums, the provision of basic urban services including safe affordable and sustainable transportation networks, and the management of the rural / urban divide are also critical to population dynamics for the post 2015 development agenda.

We believe that the regular collection and analysis of **local and national population data** is a fundamental prerequisite for follow up, review and accountability.

In addition, robust and participatory **monitoring and accountability mechanisms** will improve the credibility, ownership and effectiveness of both the ICPD beyond 2014 agenda and the Post-2015 Agenda, and their interlinkages.

To conclude, *Madam Chair*, we stand ready to contribute constructively to this session, re-emphasizing our political support to the continuing centrality of the ICPD Program of Action and the need for its objectives to be fully integrated into the post-2015 development agenda.

Finally, let us acknowledge the presence at this formal session of a **very vibrant network of civil society organizations and young women and men**: their voices have largely contributed to the successes of this Commission, and the EU and its Member States support enhanced participation of civil society in such meetings.

I thank you.