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Statement by Portugal

Delivered by

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Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the 48th session of the Commission on Population and Development and to extend congratulations also to all the other members of the Bureau. You can count on the full collaboration of my delegation to the successful conclusion of this session of the CPD. I also wish to thank the Secretary General for his reports feeding into this session, as important contributions to our debates.

This statement is fully aligned with the one made earlier by the European Union, and I take the floor today to complement some points in my national capacity.

Madam Chairperson,

This year we are gathered together as the General Assembly prepares a new development agenda to be launched at the Summit this coming September. We welcome that the post-2015 agenda seeks, for the first time, to be truly universal and transformative, to leave no one behind and to address the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – in an integrated manner.

It is in this overall context that, once again, I reaffirm Portugal's continued support to the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (held in Cairo, in 1994), as well as to the Key Actions for its Further Implementation, adopted at the ICPD+5 (approved in 1999). Portugal continues to strongly support a human-rights based approach to the themes dealt within this Agenda and to the central premise that all people are entitled to a life free from all forms of violence and discrimination on any grounds, including on the basis of sex, gender, age, marital status, health condition, including HIV status, disability, migration status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

While the development agenda we will adopt in September will be new, the groundwork for many of the new goals and targets contained in the report of the Open Working Group (of the General Assembly) on Sustainable Development Goals, can be found in the rich outcomes of development-related Conferences in the recent past. The ICPD has an important contribution in this regard: its agenda

recognized the interrelationships between many critical elements of sustainable development, including economic growth, health, education, demography, population mobility, migration, urbanization, technology, human rights and empowerment of women and girls, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for all. This sophisticated approach provided important results and lessons learned upon which we should build, and we can see now many of these issues integrated into the 17 Goals and 169 Targets to be adopted at the Summit.

Madam Chairperson,

Demographic changes and trends in world population represent both a challenge and an opportunity to achieve progress in all three pillars of sustainable development. There is a considerable demographic diversity worldwide, concerning not just the size, structure and density of population in different countries, but also in population growth projections. Portugal has the lowest fertility rate amongst the European Union member States and high levels of life expectancy at birth; the proportion of persons aged 65 years and over, in the total population, maintains an upward trend, as a consequence of a decline in fertility and of the increase in longevity. This is a worrying trend with a potential grave impact in the future – the Government is well aware of it and has adopted policies addressing the challenges on ageing, fertility, family, education, health, domestic and international migration, employment and social solidarity and gender equality. Further specific proposals and recommendations to revert this disturbing trend are being today discussed in the national Parliament.

Due to recent changes in migration flows in Portugal, the Government adopted, last March, “The Migrations Strategic Plan (2015-2020)”. The plan addresses both the integration of immigrants in Portugal, but also the return of Portuguese emigrants to the country. It entails a large number of measures notably to facilitate and support immigrants and new national citizens’ integration as well as the support to the return of Portuguese emigrants.

Madam Chairperson,

Portugal recognizes that education is a crucial factor for sustainable development. Universal access to education, based on the principle of non discrimination remains a challenge worldwide that must be seriously addressed. We believe specifically that investing in female education contributes to a greater empowerment of women, since there are close relationships between education, marriage age, fertility and mortality.

Recognizing that comprehensive sexuality education is one of the dimensions of education for health, Portugal approved in 2009 a set of principles and rules with regard to sex education in schools. In 2010 the law was extended to introduce sex education in primary and secondary schools and defined the curricula for different educational levels.

As regards sexual and reproductive health and rights, universal access to all types of family planning services, in particular to adolescents, migrants and other vulnerable groups is available; the same applies to treatment of infertility and prevention and fight against HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. The papilloma vaccine was introduced into the national immunization programme.

National maternal and child mortality rates are very low, ranking among the best indicators alongside other European countries.

Madam Chairperson,

HIV infection is internationally recognized as a very serious health problem and a threat to economic and social development. In this context, our National Programme for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS 2012-2016 intends to reduce, inter alia, the number of late diagnoses of HIV infections and of AIDS related deaths and eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV infection by the end of 2015.

Madam Chairperson,

Portugal is a staunch supporter of the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and is also firmly and consistently committed to the eradication of all forms of violence against women. Violence against women is one of the most cross-cutting and visible expressions of discrimination and inequality, and Portugal will continue to strive for its full elimination at national and international levels.

It this regard, we have strengthened our legal and technical cooperation, in particular with CPLP cooperation partners, to address jointly the issue violence against women and girls, in particular against female genital mutilation and human trafficking. We have funded the first CPLP campaign on the elimination of violence against women - "I stand up against violence" - and the training of trainers for criminal justice staff on human trafficking.

Bearing in mind the importance we attach to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, also as a precondition for social and economic justice, Portugal adopted a “Strategy on Gender Equality”. This strategy is of specific use also to our cooperation performance, contributing to the strengthening of the dimension of fighting poverty, promoting women's human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women. Indeed, when it comes to implementation, most of our international cooperation has been channeled to the education and health sectors, as well as community development, with a focus on improving skills for developing economic activities and income generation, women’s access to education and health, as well as their participation in the economy and in the decision making processes. Portugal believes we will not have a successful development process unless women and girls are given the conditions to engage as true agents of development and as drivers of societal transformation.

Madam Chairperson,

We aim to collectively replace the current development paradigm by a sustainable development one this September. We understand it will have important policy impacts that we are ready to address at national, regional and international levels. We will seek to build a better tomorrow for a growing world population, one in which we expect to live within our planetary boundaries and one in which extreme poverty will be eradicated. In this sense, having an accurate perspective of the challenges ahead through statistic data is crucial for better planning, monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies and programmes in the economic and social areas of development.

Sustainable policy planning which takes into account population dynamics, migration, urbanization, and the other pillars of the ICPD Agenda as drivers of change and sustainable growth, will remain very relevant in the years to come. Portugal will definitely continue to defend the importance of the ICPD Agenda throughout this year and beyond.

Thank you.