



THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Commission on Population and Development forty-eighth session
Item 4. - General debate

Check against delivery

STATEMENT

by

Mr. Vladimir Pešić
Assistant Minister for Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy

New York, 15 April 2015

Madam Chair,

Distinguished Representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here today and to address this honorable Commission on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. At the outset, let me congratulate you Madam chair and all bureau members on their election.

Serbia aligned itself with the statement of the EU.

Today, we live in a world with complex demographic dynamics. Population growth will continue, population migration will be more frequent and population ageing will constitute an unprecedented challenge.

As we are aware the outcome of this session will be very important for the negotiation on the Post 2015 development agenda. Therefore, Serbia reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action of ICPD and hope that these principles will be integrated into the Post 2015 development agenda. If we want to achieve the sustainable development goals we need to take in account population issues and to do our best to responsibly integrate population dynamics into our national policies.

We believe that gender equality and the empowerment and human rights of all women and girls, and the elimination of discrimination of all forms, should be at the heart of the post-2015 framework. Being aware of the persisting gaps and challenges that hamper the achievement of gender equality and the realisation of the human rights and empowerment of all women and girls, we strongly support the Open Working Group on SDG's proposal for a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. We furthermore call for a mainstreaming of gender equality and women's and girls' human rights and empowerment throughout the targets and indicators of the post-2015 framework.

We strongly believe that women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as well as the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and the eradication of harmful practices are central elements of women's and girls' human rights and critical to bringing about sustainable development and call for these areas to be integrated across the post-2015 framework. In the area of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, particular attention needs to be paid to the rights and needs of young people, including to young people's access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, including comprehensive sexuality education.

Madame Chair,

I will, very shortly, introduce the demographic situation in the Republic of Serbia and the population policy measures.

Both the demographic development and current demographic situation in the Republic of Serbia are characterized by childbirths that are far below the need for a minimum population reproduction and growth rate.

Currently, birth rate levels in Serbia are as much as 35 per cent below the need for a minimum replacement rate. In other words, with the current level of 1.43 total birth rates, the birth level in Serbia is below the European average, which is 1.6 children per woman.

The second very important issue for Serbia, is the fact that Serbia is a country of emigration. It has been estimated that the total migration balance in the period 2008-10 was of about 15.000 annually.

Also, with 17 percent share of older persons in a total population, Serbia is among the oldest populations in Europe. The results of the projections indicate that the process of population aging will continue in the first half of 21st century, and that a number of older persons who belong to a group 65+ will increase by 1/3 in 2052.

In that context, let me briefly present what my country is doing to remedy the situation.

The Population Strategy of the Republic of Serbia was adopted in 2008. The Strategy defines objectives and specific measures, with the ultimate (general) goal of sustainable demographic development to maintain the population size, that is, stationary population, as the existing one. As global economic downturn occurred immediately after its adoption, the Strategy has not been implemented in full yet.

In the national legal system, population policy measures are primarily laid down under the Labour Law and the Financial Support Law to Family with Children.

Under the Labour Law, as a population policy measure, parental leave is envisaged as a leave from work for child care in the duration of one year from and for the birth of 3rd and every subsequent child, the law allows for leave from work in the duration of 2 years. Leave from work for special childcare, if it is a child with psychological and physical disabilities is granted in the duration of up to the child's fifth birthday.

Under the Financial Support Law for Families with Children, a beneficiary is entitled to full wage compensation if he/she has been, directly and continuously, employed or self-employed for more than six months prior to the initiation of the use of wage compensation.

Furthermore, parental allowance is granted to the mother for the first four children born in row. The parental allowance is granted as a one-off sum for the birth of the first child, and in 25 monthly installments for the second, third and fourth.

Also, under the Labour Law, an employer may not terminate employment contract of a worker during pregnancy, parental leave, leave from work for childcare and special childcare.

At the end, let me emphasize that Serbia attaches great importance to population issues. Adequate social and economic measures and the certainty and possibility of long-term planning would by all means contribute to a rapid and easier decision-making on the formation of a family and birth of children.

Thank you for the attention.