



Franciscans International

A voice at the United Nations

49th Session of the United Nations Commission for Population and Development

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Oral Statement by Florence Deacon
on behalf of Franciscans International

Madam Chair,

Franciscans International welcomes the work of the Commission on Population and Development as it begins to implement the post-2015 development agenda.

When 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* on 25 September 2015, they “resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet.”

To ensure that no one is left behind in this endeavor, Franciscans International believes that attention must be paid to those who are not registered at birth. In 2012 alone, 57 million infants – four out of every ten babies delivered worldwide that year – were not registered with civil authorities. Last year, 230 million children under five lacked a birth certificate, including 85 million in Africa and 135 million in Asia and Oceania¹.

Sustainable Development Goal 16.9 states that “birth registration is critical to achieving legal identity for all people and a necessary precondition of human rights and inclusive and just societies, and the existing gaps in civil registration and vital statistics systems have serious repercussions for development prospects.” This makes access to government resources such as education and health care particularly difficult.

As noted in the Preamble to Agenda 2030, “all countries and all stakeholders acting in collaborative partnership” are needed to implement this ambitious sustainable development plan. In the Ivory Coast, Franciscans International initiated just such a partnership by gathering state representatives, civil society actors, and human rights experts to develop an action plan on how best to follow-up on previous UN recommendations to improve birth registration.

Creating space for open dialogue through partnerships such as this has helped to identify ways to modernize and simplify the process and create more effective campaigning around the issue, thus marking a tangible step forward in addressing the SD target regarding birth registration.

¹ “Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda,” Report of the Secretary-General E/CN.9/2016/3

We call upon our governments and international organizations, including all United Nations entities, to strengthen the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda by:

- *Initiating similar partnerships of state representatives, civil society actors, and human rights experts to create national action plans to improve the rate of birth registration;*
- *Inviting relevant United Nations agencies and organizations, in particular UNICEF, to provide technical assistance to set up effective institutional mechanisms for birth registry;*
- *Promoting the registration of all children, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized through a simplified and inclusive procedure.*

Unregistered children are more vulnerable to all sorts of abuses, such as sexual and economic exploitation, forced labor, early marriage, and human trafficking. According to the Secretary General's report for this commission, "In the least developed countries, children are least likely to be registered, meaning that those most in need of development interventions are the least likely to be counted."² If the Sustainable Development goals are to be a success, the registration of each and every child is essential to ensure that "no one is left behind."

Delivered by Florence Deacon
Franciscans International
Commission on Population and Development

²Programmes and innovations to strengthen the demographic evidence base for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,' Report of the Secretary General, E/CN.9/2016/4