



Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Global Outreach

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Oral Statement

Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Education Fund
Commission on Population and Development 50th Session
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Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the 200 chapters and 70,000 member families of MCCL and its Global Outreach program, which is active in 47 countries, I appreciate this opportunity to speak.

Demographic changes offer both challenges and opportunities to nations across the world. To facilitate the demographic transition and take advantage of the so-called "demographic window," many in the international community seek to reduce fertility rates in the developing world. Some, moreover, seek to encourage the legalization of abortion in countries in which unborn children are protected by law. This is the wrong approach.

No right to abortion has ever been established in international law. The ICPD Programme of Action states that abortion should never be promoted as a method of family planning and that changes to abortion policy should be made at the local or national level.

Nor is abortion necessary to protect maternal health. Maternal health depends on the quality of medical care. It does not depend on the legal status or availability of abortion. Countries such as Ireland, Poland, Malta, Chile, Kuwait, Libya, and the United Arab Emirates prohibit most or all abortions and have very low maternal mortality rates. Therefore, rather than promote abortion, nations with a high incidence of maternal and child mortality must strive to improve care for both mother and child so that all members of society can flourish.

Population change also poses dangers to older persons. In many regions of the world, the population is rapidly aging as people bear fewer children. Medical advances are increasing life expectancy as the costs associated with aging grow. These trends increase the likelihood of exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

In the midst of such changes, Member States must prioritize support for those who are elderly, sick, and disabled. Governments should reject efforts to legalize euthanasia or assisted suicide. No right to euthanasia has ever been created under international law. Instead, governments must protect patients' right to life and right to health, including palliative and mental health care.

Human beings are at the center of sustainable development, according to the ICPD Programme of Action. They deserve protection and care regardless of their age, health, ability, and dependency, and regardless of population and demographic change.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity.