

DR. NATALIA KANEM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND
Draft Closing Remarks
Fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Population and Development

New York, Friday, 23 April 2021

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Civil Society friends,
Dear Colleagues,

Congratulations on this successful session of the Commission on Population and Development.

It has been good to meet together again in person, albeit in a restricted format. It is reassuring to see Member States in the room, and I look forward to seeing our civil society partners back here soon too.

I am delighted that the Commission has adopted a meaningful, action-oriented outcome reflecting on the impact of COVID-19 and food insecurity on women and girls, and on sexual and reproductive health.

My appreciation to Member States for rallying together on the importance of food security and nutrition to accelerating the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

I am also encouraged by the in-depth discussions this week in the plenary session. They reflect the reality that more brings us together than keeps us apart – even our shared challenges.

The vital work of this Commission is integral to the broader work of the Economic and Social Commission and the General Assembly and to overall progress towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

It is critical, as we move forward, and as the world continues to grapple with the impacts of the pandemic, that our march continues.

On behalf of all of us at UNFPA, I thank our distinguished Chair, His Excellency Ambassador Yemdaogo Eric Tiare of Burkina Faso, for his vision, leadership and engagement, which were instrumental to a positive outcome this week.

Let me also thank the other members of the Bureau for their commitment over the past year to making this result a reality, in particular the representatives of Lebanon and Romania, whose leadership, experience, and perseverance made this outcome possible. Mr. Nizar Kaddouh, Ms. Cristina Popescu – thank you.

I also thank the UN DESA Population Division for their stewardship of the Commission, and I acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of my dedicated UNFPA colleagues to the success of this year's session.

Allow me to thank all of you, distinguished representatives and delegates of the Commission, for your hard work and active participation in the deliberations in the run up to, and during, this session. Your dedication to virtual negotiations, even through meals, family time, and late into the night, is much appreciated.

We should reflect on the national experiences shared during the general debate this week, and recognize the deep impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the implementation of the ICPD and the 2030 Agenda. It is time now to work together to build back better, stronger and greener.

It is my sincere hope that at our next session, which will consider the theme “*Population and sustainable development, in particular sustained and inclusive economic growth*”, that we will be able to meet together - in person - with our civil society and youth partners in the room.

On behalf of UNFPA and the UN system, let me affirm our commitment to continue to be your partner in the full achievement of the Programme of Action, on which the success of the 2030 Agenda depends.

At UNFPA, we continue to set our sights upon three ambitious aims for 2030, including in our vision for our new Strategic Plan:

- Zero unmet need for family planning,
- Zero preventable maternal deaths, and
- Zero violence and harmful practices against women and girls, including an end to child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Let's build on this week's success and the momentum collectively generated at the Nairobi Summit to accelerate the promise of ICPD25.

Chairperson, Distinguished delegates, dear participants,

The unfinished business of the ICPD Programme of Action remains.

Millions upon millions of women and girls are still waiting for the world's promises to be fulfilled, and we will not stand silent as we see progress in our shared goals slip away.

It's time for urgent action, as we ramp up our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

As Helen Keller once said, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” This is truer than ever.

Thank you once again.