

Cross-regional statement on the occasion of the 54th session of the UN Commission on Population and Development (CPD) delivered by H.E. Mr. Ville Skinnari, Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Finland on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Cabo Verde, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Uruguay

Mr Chair,

It is my pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the Governments and peoples of 81 countries: Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Cabo Verde, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Fiji, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, as well as my own country Finland.

Mr. Chair, We wish to begin by expressing our appreciation to you, the two facilitators, Lebanon and Romania, and the other members of the Bureau for your leadership and tireless effort in seeking consensus. We also thank the Secretariat and all the delegations that participated constructively to these negotiations, as well as civil society organizations for their invaluable contributions.

We remain committed to the full and effective implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the outcomes of its review conferences. We know that they are saving and improving millions of lives. We therefore place great importance on and highly value the role of the Commission on Population and Development to follow-up, review and assess the implementation of the Programme of Action. We are convinced that the Generation Equality Forum, co-organized by the Governments of France and Mexico with UN Women, celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, is crucial to meeting the objectives of the Programme of Action and will complement the commitments of the Nairobi Summit on ICPD@25.

Mr. Chair, In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission's special theme this year is critical and timely. We firmly believe that the full realization of all human rights for all, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are essential for addressing food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition, as well as for eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. We are therefore deeply concerned that hunger is increasing globally, aggravated by the impact of COVID-19 in addition to climate change. Of the 690 million people facing food insecurity in the world today, sixty percent are women and girls. Where women and girls go hungry, their sexual and reproductive health is impacted.

Pregnancy under conditions of malnutrition or undernutrition can have life-threatening consequences. Deficiencies in antenatal micronutrients contribute significantly to the risk of hemorrhages, the leading cause of maternal mortality. Infants born to undernourished mothers are more likely to have lower birth weights and are more susceptible to diseases. Impaired growth has adverse functional consequences on the child, including poor cognition and educational performance and lost productivity.

Mr. Chair, The world is not on track to meet WHO targets for a fifty per cent reduction by 2025 from the 2012 anemia level. One in three women worldwide lives with anemia, iron deficiency that can cause organ damage, if not treated. Maternal anemia is also associated with mortality and morbidity in mothers and babies. The world is not on track to reduce excess weight and obesity, which raise numerous risks to women's sexual and reproductive health, from menstrual abnormalities to gestational diabetes. Maternal obesity also poses risks for maternal and child health and wellbeing. The world is not on track either to meet the global targets on childhood stunting, exclusive breastfeeding, and low birth weight.

The COVID-19 pandemic created adverse conditions to reaching these goals, and combined with food insecurity is aggravating child, early and forced marriage, sexual and gender-based violence and other harmful practices, which threatens reversing decades of progress against malnutrition.

Mr Chair, Through the Decade of Action towards achieving the SDGs, we must do more. Nutrition, food security, sustainable development and sexual and reproductive health and rights are closely related and mutually reinforcing. The health, wellbeing and fulfillment of women, girls and adolescents throughout their life cycle depends on achieving these goals. Because of these interconnections, an intersectional approach is required to leave no one behind.

The full enjoyment of all human rights by all women, girls and adolescents includes the right to food, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Women and adolescent girls must have the ability to decide and control if, when, and how many children to have. Women and adolescent girls who choose to have children must have access to sexual and reproductive health services, including contraceptives and the ability to space pregnancies and breastfeed. Increasing exclusive breastfeeding to near-universal levels could save more than 800,000 infant lives every year.

In closing Mr. Chair, In our domestic policies and abroad, we remain deeply committed to food security for all, especially women and girls, and to the accelerated full and effective implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the outcomes of its review conferences. We see the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit as an excellent opportunity to ensure that the rights of women, girls and adolescents are included in all aspects of local, regional and global food systems. In partnership with UN agencies, civil society and the private sector, we must reverse undernutrition and malnutrition to support food security and sustainable development and harness the demographic dividend to realize the full potential of all women and girls.

I thank you.