



## **Statement**

**On behalf of the European Union and its Member States**

On the occasion of the

**54<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development**

**Agenda Point 3b**

United Nations

New York

Friday, 23 April 2021

Mr Chair, Excellences, Colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We welcome and applaud the adoption by consensus of the Resolution on the special theme of the 54<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development. While we are disappointed that persisting disparities hindered a more ambitious outcome on some of the core issues of the CPD, we commend that consensus could be reached. It is the result of a remarkable engagement by the Membership and reflects the importance of the matters at stake. We extend our thanks to the Chair, the Co-Facilitators, the Bureau Members and the Secretariat for their stewardship and their assistance during the facilitation process.

First, the text underlines the continuous relevance of the International Conference on Population and Development, its Programme of Action and the outcomes of its reviews for sustainable development. The ICPD Programme of Action marked a change of focus from specific demographic targets to the needs, aspirations and human rights of individuals. The Programme of Action centred on the improvement of individual lives and the fight against inequalities as the basis for achieving sustainable development. In that sense the ICPD process is more than a process, it has initiated policy shifts which have enabled so many lives to not only be improved but also to be saved. The outcome document of this session cannot be more explicit: it not only reaffirms the ICPD and its Programme of Action, but also calls upon Member States, in cooperation with the UN system, civil society organisations and others, to take concrete measures towards the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action.

Second, the outcome document demonstrates a collective awareness of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on population and development issues. Hard-fought progress in the area of gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, are being reversed. The increase in Sexual and Gender Based Violence and harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage is well documented. Access to sexual and reproductive health care services and family planning have also been disrupted with catastrophic consequences inter alia in terms of unintended pregnancies, including among adolescent girls. Furthermore, the closure of schools has reduced access to school nutrition, which is vital for millions of adolescents and youth. Adopting this Resolution, for the first time in five years, in this specific context demonstrates that the United Nations are up to the challenge and that they care about the very concrete hardships that millions of people and households face, ensuring that no one is left behind and giving priority to people in the most vulnerable situations.

Third, it reflects the relevance of the special theme of this year. The document refers to the specific nutritional needs of women and adolescents in reproductive age – and by doing so underlines the intrinsic link between food systems and nutrition on the one hand, and population and development on the other. It also connects healthy diets not only with the eradication of hunger and nutrition needs, but also with sustainable patterns of consumption and production which ease pressure on ecosystems and contribute to preserving the environment and fighting climate change. In the year of three COPs and of the United Nations Food System Summit, that connection needed to be made, also in the CPD context.

I thank you