



STATEMENT

**by Mr. Gheorghe Leucă, Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European
Integration of the Republic of Moldova,**

at the General Debate on item 3

of the 54th session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development

(New York, 19-23 April 2021)

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address the Commission and I wish to thank you and the Bureau for your hard work in guiding the preparation of this CPD session.

Concordant, I would like to highlight the importance of this year's session considering the preparations towards the UN Food Systems Summit in Rome and its relevance in complementing the 2021 High-Level Political Forum, where the SDG 2 on *zero hunger* will be reviewed along with other goals.

While we acknowledge the findings of the Secretary-General reports on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development, we particularly welcome the recommendations to address the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition taking into consideration the connections to demographic dynamics.

Distinguished delegates

During the last decade, my country has been passing through a significant demographic decline, characterized by ageing, relatively low fertility, rather high mortality rates as well as massive migration. This comes with serious socio-economic implications and represents one of the main challenges in achieving the sustainable development goals and targets, including SDG 2 on *zero hunger*.

Currently, we are confronted with the double burden of malnutrition. *On the one hand* - undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, *on the other* – the issue of overweight and obesity. In addition, high occurrence of childhood stunting and anemia in women of reproductive age are among the main forms of malnutrition regularly reported by the Moldovan health authorities.

As in many parts of the world, we are also concerned by the increased incidence of deaths due to noncommunicable diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer, caused primarily by unhealthy diets.

Food security is recurrently challenged by the weather conditions. Extreme climate events like heat waves, droughts and storms are affecting Moldova's agriculture, resulting in degradation of arable lands and decrease in food production.

All the factors mentioned above place the food security policies high on my Government's agenda. In this connection I would bring some examples of normative, social and health measures put in place so far.

Reaffirming its commitment to implementing the ICPD agenda, my Government is continuously working on integrating the demographic dimension into the national policy framework, shifting from the “demographic security approach” towards a demographic policy agenda that is driven by data and human rights.

With the UNFPA support, a statistical population register is set up to unify all relevant data sources to improve the availability of indicators for tracking the progress on the ICPD agenda in the framework of SDGs.

We put special focus on adjusting and strengthening the national regulatory framework on food safety and nutrition in line with the WHO recommendations and European standards, as part of the Moldova-EU Association Agreement.

In collaboration with UNICEF, health workers are promoting the importance of exclusive breastfeeding of infants under 6 months. The provisions of the international code of marketing have been partially incorporated in the national legislation limiting the promotion of breast-milk substitutes.

The implementation of the national programmes on antenatal and primary healthcare revealed encouraging improvements in the nutritional status of pregnant women and better birth outcomes. Measures like universal availability of iodized salt and fortification of 30% of bread products with iron and folic acid resulted in the gradual reduction of micronutrients deficiency in Moldovan population.

It is generally agreed that tackling malnutrition is not anymore, the responsibility of any sector alone. In that sense, we are continuously working to mainstream nutrition and healthy diets in the health, education, agriculture, social protection, marketing and economic policy sectors.

Ladies and gentlemen

While it is encouraging to note that in recent few years progress has been made in many key areas of the ICPD Programme of Action, the COVID-19 pandemic has induced negative impact on many population groups in Moldova, further deepening population’s inequalities and generating new vulnerabilities.

The vulnerability to global epidemics has demonstrated the need for reform to ensure universal access to essential health services, robust social protection schemes and basic income coverage. All these priorities are obviously on the agenda of my Government, which works closely with the development partners.

In conclusion, it is worth emphasizing that the Republic of Moldova attaches great importance to this year’s CPD theme, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to negatively affect vulnerable and marginalized groups, disrupt food security worldwide, increase poverty, damage public health systems, and undermine maternal and child nutrition programmes.

In the same vein, I would also like to express my country’s determination and engagement to contribute by local and international actions to collective efforts to improve food security and overcome malnutrition, aiming for a sustainable population development, fully rooted in the ICPD principles.

I thank you for your attention.