

**U.S. Statement at UN Commission on Population and Development's
54th Annual Session, General Debate
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Delivered by U.S. Representative to ECOSOC, a.i., Ambassador Elisabeth Millard

Mr. Chairman,

The United States is pleased to participate in the Fifty-Fourth Session of the Commission on Population and Development and its review of the implementation the ICPD Program of Action. Achieving the ICPD goals and the related 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development targets require our unyielding attention and steadfast commitment.

At Cairo, we recognized that advancing human rights, equality and empowerment for women, and global health fundamentally contribute to sustainable development and peace. It is critical to recall the ICPD's recognition of the intersection of poverty, malnutrition, the nutritional needs of women of reproductive age, and safe motherhood and child survival. The specific issues of the girl child's access to nutritious food starts in the womb and extends throughout women's lifetimes. Women and children are the most vulnerable to the consequences of malnutrition, as can be seen through the high rates of stunting and anemia in these groups. We know the critical importance of additional investment in adolescent girls to compensate for earlier inadequacies. Access to family planning helps to prevent high-risk and unintended pregnancies, which can directly impact maternal, child, and adolescent nutrition as well as household food security.

The United States recognizes that sexual and reproductive health and rights are fundamental to achieving gender equality. Promoting reproductive empowerment and protecting bodily autonomy, including through voluntary access to contraceptives, and prevention of gender-based violence, are priorities in U.S. global health and humanitarian assistance. The global community must accelerate its efforts given the stark data continuing to emerge on COVID-19's disproportionate impact on women and girls including on maternal mortality, unintended pregnancies, and increased risk of gender-based violence.

We face a perilous time where in the COVID-19 pandemic threatens food security and nutrition today and for years to come in developing countries already impacted by hunger and poverty. In humanitarian crises around the world, conflict-driven hunger has led to pregnant and lactating women facing severe malnutrition and millions of children under the age of five at risk of starvation and stunting. The United States is committed to decreasing the impact of stunting which is associated with poorer cognitive and social development in children, and has lasting effects at the individual and societal level.

As we consider important intersections across our programming, an example, still critically relevant 25 years after Cairo, emerges from PEPFAR's 2021 Country Operational Plan which calls on its programs to enhance nutritional support for adults and children and coordinates those interventions across its programs, including for Preventing Mother To Child Transmission and Orphans and Vulnerable Children.

The United States is committed to taking action to prevent widespread hunger, malnutrition and poverty that can pose serious challenges to security and prosperity including through supporting women and girl's resilience. Recognizing that women have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response, as healthcare workers, caregivers, and in securing food and resources for their families, we must also work to ensure that our recovery plans reflect women's roles as leaders and their unique needs. President Biden has committed that the United States will be an ally, a partner, and a leader on these critical priorities.