



Oral Statement of the Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam) at the 54th Session of the Commission on Population and Development

Chairperson,

Access to food and good nutrition is one of the most basic needs of every human being. As population has increased, so too has agricultural innovation to ensure that a sufficient supply of food can be generated. However, distributing that food presents challenges, and these have been exacerbated by the pandemic of the last year.

This is a pressing topic, and worthy of the attention of the CPD. Nevertheless, it is troubling that several times in recent years, the Commission has failed to reach consensus, and the same controversial issues that strained the process to the breaking point are reemerging yet again and threatening to prevent an agreed outcome on a topic on which there is much room for agreement.

The concept of “sexual and reproductive health and rights” or SRHR has never been adopted nor defined by the General Assembly, and to the extent that it has been defined, it includes elements that have also been repeatedly been rejected by the General Assembly, such as a right to abortion.

Chairperson,

To the extent that SRHR contains uncontroversial elements, there already exists widespread agreement. Reducing maternal mortality has been a high priority from ICPD to the MDGs to the SDGs, and progress is being made to ensure safe childbirth around the world, albeit more slowly than we would wish. To that end, nutrition is a key component, as maternal anaemia is a critical risk factor for maternal deaths. For children in the first thousand days of life, which begins in the womb, good maternal nutrition supports healthy pregnancy and subsequent breastfeeding to ensure every child has a healthy start to life.

We hear much about unmet needs for family planning, yet the main reasons for such “needs” are not lack of access, but concern about side effects, personal opposition, or a low perceived risk of pregnancy. But when an unmet need for food exists, it is far more likely to be a matter of access and cost, and not the result of a personal choice.

We urge the Commission to maintain its focus on this year’s theme, especially during this difficult time in global history, and resist seeing another opportunity for consensus lost due to needless controversy. Thank you.