

Statement of Bulgaria

VIRTUAL MEETING ON THE FUTURE ROLE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (28 January 2021)

Bulgaria continues to be supportive of the Commission on Population and Development as this body is the only UN body entrusted with the follow-up to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. My country will also continue to work for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the outcomes of its review conferences. In terms of the three questions, we would like to make the following remarks:

Question 1: Given that the Commission is the only intergovernmental forum focused on the implementation of the PoA of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in the United Nations, how can we improve its work to better assist Member States and the international community at large in advancing the ICPD agenda while contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

- The resolutions adopted by the CPD should be shorter, more concise and action-oriented which will help the member states and will provide them with practical guidance in their efforts to accelerate the implementation of the ICPD PoA;
- The selection of the themes should reflect not only specific aspects of the ICPD agenda but it should also reveal the linkages with the A2030;
- The Commission should be able to address emerging issues or evolving issues that were not foreseen when deciding on its multi-year work plan. This will allow the Commission to stay relevant and engaged. A good example in this regard could be the 2020 session of the Commission (53rd session). Such an effect could also be achieved by introducing a parallel theme to the chosen one.

Question 2: Population and development issues and trends, including drivers and impacts, have important implications for the further implementation of the Programme of Action and the achievement of the SDGs. What role can the Commission play in guiding Member States and the international community in responding to these issues and trends?

- The SG's reports should be evidence-based and should include national inputs. They should contain thorough analyses of the issues and trends, as well as of the causes and their drivers. It is also important that they contain concrete recommendations for actions which could indicate how the implementation of the ICPD contributes to the implementation of the A2030;
- It will be useful if more expert level panel discussions are added to the agenda of the Commission. Such panels should include speakers representing a diverse group of stakeholders from academia, civil society, private sector and international organizations. The participation in those panels of women and young people should be prioritized since they can bring a unique and relevant perspective to the discussions in the Commission;

- Due consideration should be given to the regional dimension. It could be done by increasing the participation of the UN Regional Commissions to report on the progress in implementing the ICPD PoA in their respective regions. The representatives of the UNFPA regional offices can be invited as guests or panelists to bring the field perspective to the discussions;
- The participation of civil society in the sessions of the Commission should be strengthened. It could be done by holding dedicated civil society events ahead of the sessions of the Commission or having open informals as we had them during the sessions of the Open Working Group on SDGs.

Question 3: In order to address the above questions and issues, would it be desirable or feasible for the Commission to adjust its methods of work (organizational aspects, substantive elements, outcome)? If so, could the practices and experiences of other subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) provide any guidance?

- Bulgaria is in favour of introducing a ministerial segment, which will raise the profile of the CPD and will increase the political awareness of the ICPD agenda. The Commission already had such segment during its 52nd session and it proved to be useful and attractive;
- Bulgaria is also in favour of an annual negotiated outcome as a result of the session of the CPD as it signals Member States' commitment to push for a normative progress, it facilitates policy dialogue and supports the work of the UNFPA. The Commission has the tradition to adopt its resolutions by consensus and we think this is the option Member States should favour. At the same time, the Commission has been unable to produce negotiated outcome for years now (except for the adoption of a political declaration in 2019) and this raised doubts about CPD's relevance. From this perspective voting can be a practical option but only when all other avenues for reaching an agreement are exhausted;
- A clearer division of labour and the need for increased cooperation between DESA and UNFPA in servicing the CPD and its Bureau could significantly improve the efficiency of the Commission. UNFPA's current status as an "observer" does not fully reflect its normative role in safeguarding and promoting the ICPD agenda. UNFPA should be given a more visible role in advising and supporting the Commission, leveraging its strong technical and programming capacity as well as its intergovernmental expertise to ensure the Commission's success.

Last but not least, we would like to raise the issue of what would be the way forward after this discussion. Bulgaria stands ready to engage in further actions in this regard. Probably it is not practical to expect a decision in the form of a resolution this year – it is too late – but we can continue this discussion next year with the ambition to adopt a resolution depending on the situation and the need of it.