

C-Fam Oral Statement at the 55th Session of the Commission on Population and Development

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of Civil Society for the Family, an international coalition of over 200 organizations dedicated to protection of the family.

We are grateful to member states, as the principal stakeholders in this process, for allowing this space for civil society to participate in the debate of the commission.

The theme of the commission this year presents a unique opportunity to think beyond the same old tired controversial debates about sexual mores or sexual and reproductive health, in which this commission has been mired too many times in recent years.

The nexus between population policies and sustainable, sustained and inclusive economic growth is largely ignored by the international population establishment. One aspect that is neglected more than others is the importance of population growth for sustained economic growth. Alarming, low-fertility and aging pose new and overlooked challenges to economic growth. Put simply, without population growth there can be no sustained economic growth.

For many decades the world's population experts have focused on reducing fertility in developing countries by promoting contraception, abortion, and a small family norm. Many developing countries have welcomed these efforts and invested their own limited resources to slow population growth in the hope of reaping a "demographic dividend."

Sadly, the demographic dividend has not materialized everywhere. Many developing countries, and some where fertility is now among the lowest in the world, have yet to see any such dividend materialize, or they have seen only partial realization of this theory.

Now the entire world is facing a new challenge, low fertility and ageing. As population experts increasingly acknowledge, this is an unprecedented challenge for which the world is not prepared.

Many countries will grow old before they have a real chance to develop. It will lead to fiscal and social protection systems that are already faltering to the brink. Tragically, the poorest will those who will be impacted the most.

And low-fertility and aging is affecting all aspects of sustainability, including energy production. Economists are warning that private companies and governments are failing to scale up investments in innovative green energy (i.e. clean nuclear plants) because they do not foresee the possibility of recouping their investments. Population projections do not allow them to recoup their initial investments.

Protection of the family, in line with the obligations of member states under international human rights law, is a necessary component of the population policies needed to achieve

economic growth that is sustained, sustainable, and inclusive. The United Nations system should be raising awareness of these neglected population policies.

So we plead with member states. The biggest population threat to humanity is not from overpopulation. It is a world where children are unwelcome and unwanted, and families are badgered into a small family norm by cultural and economic forces beyond their control. The time is now to change course and build a world where all life is celebrated and protected from conception to natural death. Perhaps we can change things before it is too late.