



Fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Population and Development

Opening remarks by H.E. Gheorghe Leucă, (Republic of Moldova)

Chair of the fifty-sixth session

Monday, 10 April 2023, 10.00 a.m.

Madam Deputy-Secretary-General,
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Mr. Li Junhua,
UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all.

I am very pleased to see you all in this Conference Room this morning as we are holding our first fully in person Commission since April 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc in education.

- More than 90 % of the world's children had their education interrupted.
- School closures and other disruptions deepened the global learning crisis, exacerbating existing inequalities in access to, and quality of, education.
- The pandemic also reversed some of the hard-won progress to achieve gender equality in education.

To recover pandemic-related learning losses and to revamp education in a rapidly changing world, the Secretary-General convened the Transforming Education Summit in September 2022.

This year's Commission on Population and Development with its focus on education can help to promote the outcomes of last year's Summit.

This Commission has also the potential to make an important contribution to this year's High-level Political Forum on sustainable development and to the SDG Summit in September 2023.

Excellencies,

In 2021 and 2022, after several years of stalemate, the Commission was able to reach consensus around a resolution on the special theme of the session, demonstrating the Commission's continued relevance in assessing the status of implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the SDGs related to population.

As Chair, I am committed to the success of this year's session.

I am grateful that delegations have already reached consensus on the three draft decisions the Bureau had put forward.

I am aware that there are education issues that might be seen as sensitive. At the same time, there are also many education issues that unite us. The global crisis in education is real. We owe it to the world to find solutions to the crisis and this session provides us with a great opportunity to answer urgent calls for actions.

During the discussions on the future role and organization of this Commission a few years ago, most, if not all, delegations expressed the wish to continue the practice to adopt draft proposals by consensus. One of the key conclusions of those discussions was that efforts to reach consensus critically depended on political will.

I trust that delegations will soon reach consensus on the draft resolution on the special theme, as we look forward to celebrating the 30th anniversary of the ICPD Programme of Action next year.

We have a solemn responsibility to learners.

This year, the population aged 6-11 years, corresponding to those in primary education, is expected to reach an all-time high of 820 million.

In 2029, the population attending secondary education is expected to reach a peak.

Even though we have made much progress in expanding school enrolment and in narrowing the gender gap in education, much remains to be done to improve completion rates and the quality of education.

Let us demonstrate the continued relevance of this Commission.

Dear colleagues,

The Bureau has worked hard to prepare what we think is an informative session.

We look forward to the substantive discussions that will enrich our deliberations.
We also look forward to the successful adoption of the resolution and the other draft proposals on Friday.

In closing, let me express my deep appreciation for the support of my fellow Bureau members and for the collaborative spirit in which we have prepared this session of the Commission on Population and Development.

In particular, let me thank the co-facilitators for their continued efforts to reach consensus on the draft resolution.

Let me also thank our colleagues in DESA, in DGACM and in UNFPA for the unfailing support that they have provided to the Bureau in organizing the annual session.