

PGA Remarks at the informal plenary meeting to mark the 30th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development

29 April 2024 at 3.00 p.m. , General Assembly Hall

Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive-Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA),

Mr. Li Junhua, Under Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs,

Your Excellency, Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, President of the General Assembly at its 73rd session and Executive-Director of Global Women Voices,

Ms. Ashley Judd, UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador,

Ms. Victoria Flamant, Youth Representative,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am especially pleased to convene this informal plenary meeting to mark the **30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, coming as it does contiguously with our recent high level Sustainability Week, with which the linkages are strong.**

At the historic Conference held in 1994, Governments defined a bold agenda that placed people's dignity and rights at the heart of sustainable development.

The adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action in Cairo marked a new era of commitment – by Governments and the global community at large, as well as other stakeholders including civil society and youth leaders – to integrate population concerns into **all** spheres of socio-economic and environmental activity.

In this way, the Programme’s inspiring vision anchored the critical issues of population, poverty, the environment, consumption, and production within the wider conversation on **sustainability** – acknowledging the interlinked nature of the challenges we face.

And that no single aspect can be addressed in isolation – but rather as an integrated dynamic whole.

The aim was straightforward – **to improve the quality of life for the present and future generations.**

(BRIEF PAUSE)

Thirty years on post its adoption, we have seen significant advances and laudable progress in implementation of the Programme – notably, in the areas of poverty reduction, life expectancy and food security.

Maternal deaths have declined, while access to primary education has expanded, for both girls and boys.

But we must also admit that progress has been uneven – both within and among countries.

Multifaceted global crises – from climate change to conflict – have jeopardized many of these hard-won gains.

Despite these headwinds, the Programme’s visionary objectives have only grown in importance.

Universal access to quality education, gender equality and a reduction in maternal and child mortality are all essential to the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the realization of its central promise to *leave no one behind*.

Perhaps nowhere is this more visible than in the Programme’s unswerving focus on reducing poverty, improving access to quality education – and importantly – recognizing the empowerment of women and girls as a **precondition** for peace, prosperity, and the well-being of **all people**.

Today – with the goal of universality still before us – we are challenged to ask: *How do we build on these gains, and what must we do to address our shortcomings?*

(BRIEF PAUSE)

We must start by acknowledging that progress across the Sustainable Development Goals will surely continue to stall – unless we **do more, much**

more, to bridge the gender gap and to reduce poverty and socio-economic inequality, everywhere.

We must certainly do much more to acknowledge that empowered women and girls, children and others in vulnerable situations are **central** for peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable societies – and **pro – actively do much more** to support and facilitate them in the full realization of their potential.

This means we must **do much more** to leverage the power of the ICPD Programme of Action to realise a sustainable future for **people and planet**.

We must therefore take the next bold steps within the context of the ongoing negotiations for the **Summit of the Future** in September 2024 and preparations for the **World Social Summit** in 2025.

These processes are part of a continuum of efforts to deliver faster, fairer and smarter on the 2030 Agenda – and to renew the social contract underpinning a reinvigorated multilateral system.

It was with this in mind that I convened the first-ever UN General Assembly **Sustainability Week** earlier this month – exploring avenues to ignite and accelerate sustainability across the global economy.

And it is also why I chose sustainability as one of the **four watch words** in the mission of my Presidency – acknowledging the urgency of the efforts needed to get us back on track to meet our targeted goals.

(BRIEF PAUSE BEFORE A CLOSE)

Excellencies,

Dear friends,

In closing, it is worth recalling the apt words of Dr. Nafis Sadik, former UNFPA Executive Director, who proved to be ahead of the times in understanding that, **and I quote:**

"When the essential needs of the individual are addressed, those of larger groups – the family, the community, the nation and indeed the planet – are more likely to be kept in the right perspective."

Many of the challenges that have hampered implementation of the Programme of Action over the last 30 years continue to resonate across our societies today.

So we must find fresh, innovative ways to address and indeed surmount these challenges.

Let us, as the Programme of Action demands of us, reestablish common ground.

Let us cement our efforts, yet again, in our common humanity – the ethos of the adoption of the Programme of Action thirty years ago.

And let us rededicate ourselves, in earnest, to a shared future of **peace, prosperity, progress** and **sustainability**, for all, with all, everywhere.

I thank you.

* * * * *