

The 30-year anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the adoption of its Programme of Action is a momentous occasion.

By placing people and their rights firmly at its centre, the Programme of Action transformed the way we think about population and development.

Today, this people-centred approach is at the very heart of the development agenda, ensuring that we address the needs and aspirations of all people, while giving priority to reaching the furthest behind first.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Your presence here is a reaffirmation of the enduring commitment to the vision of the Programme of Action adopted three decades ago in Cairo.

Over the past thirty years, we have made remarkable progress. Today, people live healthier and longer lives than in 1994. Maternal deaths and deaths among children under age five have declined. People are better nourished and are more educated. Greater access to information and family planning and strides towards gender equality have enabled millions of couples and individuals to decide — freely and responsibly — their number of children.

While we have reason to celebrate, the vision of the ICPD agenda is still far from being universally realized. Progress remains uneven both within and across countries. Climate change, natural and man-made disasters, economic instability, geopolitical

tensions, civil strife and wars risk stalling progress and, in some cases, even reversing the hard-earned gains of the past 30 years. That is why it is so critical for us to reaffirm our commitment to implementing the Programme of Action today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With less than six years remaining until 2030, the Programme of Action can serve as an accelerator to steer the global community toward the achievement of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For many of these – including those related to ending poverty, ensuring healthy lives and well-being, achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment, and combatting climate change – it will be difficult to make tangible progress without fully leveraging the ICPD Programme of Action.

We also cannot ignore that the world is changing rapidly. Today, there are more than 8 billion people, compared to 5.6 billion in 1994. Of these, over 3 billion are young people and children under the age of 25. These young people--the driving force behind innovation, progress, and positive change—will require critical investments in education, health care and opportunities for decent work if they are to play a key role in promoting global development. At the same time, the number and share of older persons has grown rapidly presenting new challenges and opportunities that we must rise to meet.

Therefore, as we gather today and this week to commemorate the achievements of the past 30 years, let us look to the future and focus on how to work together to fulfil the promise of the ICPD Programme of Action. Together we can ensure that no one is left

behind and meet the needs of present and future generations.

Thank you.
