



**Statement of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations, at the 57<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Population and Development, in explanation of position after the adoption of the Declaration on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development.**

*New York, 3 May 2024*

Madam Chair,

The Holy See commends the Commission on Population and Development for its adoption of the political declaration to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development. Furthermore, we thank you, Madam Chair, the facilitators and all delegations for their work on the draft over the past few weeks.

From the outset, the Holy See expressed its hope for an outcome in the form of a focused, balanced, and consensual political declaration. When presented with a substantive text as the zero-draft, my delegation made it clear that this required a substantive process in the form of a paragraph-by-paragraph negotiation to ensure a balanced outcome. In this regard, we thank you, Madam Chair, for listening and responding to the concerns expressed by many delegations, including my own, on the working methods for the Commission.

My delegation prioritized finding consensus on a political declaration that would reaffirm the overarching aim of the ICPD to foster sustainable development for all, with a particular recognition of its crucial link to poverty eradication.

While recognizing that the final text is concise, the Holy See finds it unfortunate that the political declaration and its impact are weakened by the omission of critical issues. Most regrettable of all is the lack of any reference in the political declaration to poverty eradication. The 2030 Agenda, which the declaration itself recognises as mutually reinforcing with the ICPD Plan of Action (OP5), reaffirms that “eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development”<sup>1</sup>. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the urgent need for poverty eradication is not reflected in this text.

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<sup>1</sup>Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015, A/RES/70/1

Moreover, we share our regret that, on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Day of the Family, this Commission was unable to reaffirm one of the fundamental principles of the ICPD Plan of Action, namely that “the family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened” and that the family “is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support.”<sup>2</sup>

Such omissions represent, in the view of my delegation, the wider shift evident in the three decades since Cairo. The implementation of the ICPD Plan of Action has become increasingly narrow in focus, with a move away from addressing development issues that align with the reality of those living in developing countries, preferring rather to frame population as an issue to be “solved”.

This is clear in the push for abortion under the guise of politically correct language, making it the focus of ICPD and the implementation of its PoA. This is not just a harmful misunderstanding of the PoA, but of development in a wider sense. It also leads to the erosion of respect for the sanctity of human life and the inalienable dignity of the human person.

Madam Chair,

The Holy See is obliged to make a reservation on the adopted text, reiterating what was presented by the Holy See at the International Conference on Population and Development, which remains valid and in force:

1. The term gender is understood by the Holy See as “*grounded in biological sexual identity, that is, the two sexes, male and female*”.<sup>3</sup>

Thank you, Madam. Chair.

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<sup>2</sup>Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Principle 9.

<sup>3</sup> Reservations presented by the Holy See at the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994.