

**COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages

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Economic and
Social Affairs

*Statement by Ms. Katja Lasseur, Chair of the fifty-eighth session
of the Commission on Population and Development*

Excellencies,

Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka,

Minister of State for Development and Coordination of

Government Action of Benin,

Under-Secretary-General for Policy in the Executive Office of the
Secretary-General,

Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, Under-
Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs,

Distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends,

It is both an honour and a privilege to welcome you to the
fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Population and
Development.

We gather here on World Health Day—a moment that reminds
us of the fundamental truth at the heart of our work: health is not
a privilege. It is a human right and a prerequisite for sustainable
development.

The theme of this year's session, "Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages," speaks not only to the heart of the ICPD Programme of Action, but also to the soul of our shared development aspirations.

Aspirations of a post-2030 world in which every individual has access to quality and affordable health-care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially those left furthest behind. Where we equip young people to shape their own futures and where older persons can age with dignity within a rapidly changing world.

Thirty years ago, at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, we reframed the global conversation around demography – moving beyond the numbers, to the people on the ground. We recognized that development must be people-centered, rights-based, and driven by dignity and the right to make choices. For example, if, when and with whom to have children.

Last year, at the Thirtieth Anniversary of the ICPD, we didn't just celebrate that milestone — we recommitted to accelerating its full and urgent implementation. Because the Programme of Action is just as relevant today as it was over thirty years ago.

Excellencies,

Yes, we've made progress and we will celebrate it this week at the CPD forum. Maternal and child mortality has declined. We came close to eradicating HIV. Lifespans are longer. Barriers to access to health services, information, education and contraceptives have been removed. But if we are honest with ourselves: too many health-related targets in the 2030 Agenda are not on track to be reached by 2030.

Too many women and girls are still denied their bodily autonomy or face violence. Too many women still die giving birth – even though the cause is preventable. Too many young people still lack access to comprehensive sexuality education. And too many communities, especially those in humanitarian and climate-vulnerable contexts, are still left behind.

Excellencies, our health systems must be resilient and equitable. They must center primary healthcare and universal health coverage. They must meet people's needs across the life course—from birth to old age – keeping up with the demographic trends of the future world. And they must be designed with, and not just for, the communities they serve.

Demographic change evolves rapidly and doesn't do so in isolation. It intersects with climate change, technological transformation, and migration patterns. These aren't challenges to be managed—they are realities that must shape our policies.

Colleagues,

Our collective dedication to sustaining and accelerating progress toward the ICPD objectives is evident from the strong high-level presence in the room today. This year, more than 120 Member States and observers are contributing to the Commission's general discussion, alongside nearly 50 NGOs. Furthermore, over 30 side events have been organized. That's not just participation—it's momentum. And we must carry that momentum forward, because time is not on our side.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

The Bureau has worked hard to engage with various stakeholders to ensure an informative session. Please let me express my deep appreciation for the support from my fellow Bureau members in preparing this session. 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.

On a final note, I would like to say, let us be bold in our deliberations. Let us be unapologetic in putting rights and dignity at the center of our strategies. Only unwavering dedication can make the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action a

reality. And let us, together, reaffirm the promise made 30 years ago: that every person counts, and every person matters—not as a number, but as a life full of potential.

As Chair, I am wholly committed to the success of this year's session. I wish us all a productive and inspiring week ahead and we look forward to learning from the varied and valuable real-lived experiences of countries and stakeholders.

Thank you.