



STATEMENT of BELIZE

BY

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Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

Belize wishes to align itself with the statement made by the distinguished delegate from Costa Rica on behalf of CELAC.

Mr. Chairman, let me begin by expressing sincerest thanks to the Secretary-General for his three excellent reports that have assisted greatly in informing this important session of the Commission on Population and Development. This 47th session of the CPD provides a good opportunity to pause to assess the gains we have made under the Programme of Action, but more importantly to agree on how to advance our efforts to ensure sustained, equitable economic growth and sustainable development for all our people.

We also wish to thank the UN System as a whole and the UNFPA in particular, for their partnership and support to Member States during the global survey process and the regional reviews which have informed the “Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the ICPD beyond 2014”. For Belize the preparation of our responses for the global survey provided us with an excellent opportunity to reflect on the meaning of human rights in the context of our own population dynamics and national development. The process enabled a stocktaking of government’s and civil society’s efforts to make human rights real and meaningful for Belizeans.

We therefore welcome the report, its findings and recommendations. It is clear that the actions identified in the report are crucial for the further implementation of the ICPD agenda and for achieving the goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action. The focus on increasing wealth and decreasing income inequalities; further advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment; the need to invest in human capital development, especially in the case of young people; addressing the inequalities in universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, strengthening of urban and rural health systems, protection and inclusion of older persons and sustainable development strongly resonate with us as these themes and issues mirror our own national development agenda.

Mr. Chairman please permit me to share a few highlights from our rich national experience in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action.

The Government of Belize has taken a rights based approach to development that has been amplified over the past five years. Respect for human rights is a guiding principle of Horizon 2030, our national development blueprint.

For Belize, national development and the full realization of the human rights of all Belizeans are two sides of the same coin. We believe that all Belizeans must be assured of a certain minimum standard of living, which serves as a common basis for the full enjoyment of all human rights.

Over the past five years, considerable efforts have been invested in the reform of our social protection systems particularly focusing on the modernization of social safety net programmes. This has included the introduction of a conditional cash transfer programme, an increase in the number of older persons receiving welfare services and the introduction of a food subsidy. The Government of Belize has sought to guarantee the human rights of key population groups including older persons, children, people living with HIV/AIDS, women, and youths.

Mr. Chairman, one of the major initiatives of the Government of Belize is the revision of the National Gender Policy which was endorsed by Cabinet in March 2013. The Revised Gender Policy builds on the 2002 Policy focuses on reducing gender disparities in five key areas: Health, Education/Skills Training, Wealth and Employment Generation, Violence Producing Conditions and Power and Decision-making. As all good policies should, the Revised National Gender Policy was the subject of spirited debate, among Belizeans. It provided an opportunity for a national dialogue about gender relations, diversity and human rights, which as one can imagine is ongoing.

We have adopted a comprehensive approach to addressing gender-based violence. Domestic legislation has been strengthened to broaden the range and scope of protections available to victims. Within the last 2 years, we amended our legislation to more effectively address sexual violence, revised and strengthened our human trafficking laws and passed a new Act dealing with the commercial sexual exploitation of children. There is a National Gender-based Violence Action plan that seeks to ensure the proper implementation of these laws and the accompanying policies and programmes.

In the area of sexual and reproductive health, through a strong partnership between government and civil society great strides have been made in expanding coverage and ensuring broader access to services and commodities within the framework of our National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy. And in this regard Mr. Chairman, the

invaluable work of the Belize Family Life Association must be duly noted. Our maternal and child health programme has grown from strength to strength and we are very proud to say that in 2011 and 2013 Belize recorded zero maternal deaths. A feat we are diligently trying to achieve again in 2014.

Belize has also invested heavily in education and so we have achieved gender parity and universal access at primary level. We are now focusing our efforts on ensuring universal access to secondary education through secondary school financing reform. Furthermore, skills training, apprenticeship and second chance education programmes have been expanded and strengthened with a view to preparing our young people to become productive members of society.

Mr. Chairman, as Belize takes stock of the status of our national implementation of the ICPD programme of Action , it is very clear that despite the gains, it is still very much work in progress. I therefore join the many speakers before me who have highlighted the continued relevance of the ICPD agenda beyond 2014. It is imperative that we not only stay the course, but also ensure that there are strong linkages with the post 2015 development agenda.

Belize therefore reiterates its support, already expressed through our participation in the global survey process and our endorsement of the Montevideo Consensus, for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

We stand ready to do our part as a member of the international community to ensure that we live in a world where the human rights are guaranteed and the dignity and worth of every single human being is recognized and respected.

I thank you.