

Statement submitted by an Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture

The Ordo Iuris Institute welcomes the UN efforts to recognize the issue of population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development. On the occasion of the 54th session of the Commission on Population and Development, we would like to bring to attention relevant issues concerning population, nutrition and sustainable development. Below we present the position regarding: “Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development”.

Firstly, we express our concern regarding the report E/CN.9/2020/2 relating to the 53rd Session of the Commission, which included postulates of depopulation character related to promotion of the idea of birth control. According to the report: “Population growth is an important driver of increased food consumption in many countries. Slower population growth combined with more responsible patterns of consumption and production would ease pressure on ecosystems, reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and allow the world more time to identify and adopt new technologies that mitigate adverse impacts or facilitate adaptation”. The aforementioned document does not elaborate on the problem of malnutrition and hunger in Africa and does not address the nutritional and populational problems in a proper way. The main message of the document is that natural resources are dwindling, and the population is expanding, which is allegedly the reason why the world keeps starving. This approach fits in with the controversial idea of Neo-Malthusianism. The population growth should be identified as a challenge, not a problem nor a threat to global security. We call on the Commission to tackle the problems of major importance such as hunger. The authors of the document do not notice that about 1.3 billion tons of food are estimated to be wasted annually. They also ignore the numerous voices of experts indicating that the main problem is not the lack of food, but the difficulties with its distribution and access to it.

Secondly, we do not agree to combat the global malnutrition problems by promoting the notion of “reproductive and sexual health and reproductive rights”, which still raises many doubts in the international discourse. According to the report of the Secretary-General on world demographic trends (E/CN.9/2020/5): “Increased investment will be needed to ensure that universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services and information, including for family planning, is well integrated into national plans to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (47). It should be underlined that the notion of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights is still not recognized by binding international law treaties. Moreover, non-binding arrangements made at the most important conferences organized by the United Nations clearly indicate that abortion may never be promoted as one of the methods of family planning, and states and non-governmental organizations are obliged to reduce the number of abortions performed (Art. 8.25 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo). At the same time, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its preamble directly indicate that a child requires protection both before and after birth (Art. 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child). While the notion of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights is not recognized in human right treaties it is clearly stated, for example in article 12th of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, that it is the obligation of a state to protect women’s health especially in terms of perinatal care and promotion of proper nutrition of mothers and children. Therefore, the statement of the Commission on Population and Development should be primarily based on these binding provisions.

In accordance with the Report of General Secretary Population, Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Development E/CN.9/2020/2 “Dietary changes involving increased consumption of plants and decreased consumption of animal products, especially in high-income countries, are important both for mitigating climate change and for improving population health”. Recommendations to follow a vegetarian or vegan diet can have serious consequences and cause people to malnutrition, and thus result in various diseases. Such a diet requires adequate supplementation and consumption of sufficient amounts of protein. The report does not mention the aspect of non-ecological transport of many vegetables, which sometimes have to be carried for long distances by plane to reach consumers.

In conclusion, we call on Member States to pay attention to the actual problems regarding population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development. We especially express the position that the most important problems are hunger, malnutrition and lack of equal access to food. Fighting this problem should be the priority of the UN policy. We cannot agree to promotion of abortion, the concepts of depopulation, discouraging people from having children or mass encouragement to eat plants and resign from meat. It is important to respect everyon’s freedom and to leave the liberty of choice on such sensitive issues.