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STATEMENT by
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**Commission on Population and Development
Forty-fifth session**

Item 4. National experience in population matters:
Adolescents and youth
General Debate

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Mr. Chairman,

It gives me great pleasure to address the forty-fifth session of the Commission on Population and Development on behalf of the Republic of Croatia, at the General Debate on national experiences in population matters regarding adolescents and youth. Croatia looks forward to a successful outcome of the current session of the Commission.

Mr. Chairman,

The core values and goals contained in the ICPD Programme of Action set out in Cairo in 1994, and incorporated into the measures of Croatia's national population policies and programmes, address the greatest development challenges my country is facing today, that is with regard to adolescents and youth.

Adolescents and youth represent a very vulnerable social group in Croatia. This is not only due to the negative impacts the economic and financial crisis has on the national labour market but also due to a shift in values. Young people unentitled to employment insurance are more likely to face relative poverty and social exclusion. We are aware of the emerging phenomenon of the "New Poor" and of the impact of this on our national population and development agenda, as well as, on achieving MDG1 – the eradication of relative poverty.

Today in Croatia, young people are continuing to put off to an older age embarking on normal adult life with its attributes of independent living, marriage, as well as parenthood. Consequently Croatia is an ageing population and its birth rate, although stable over the years, is well below the replacement rate. Parenthood seems to be a matter of chance rather than of choice. A favourable climate for demographic renewal is connected to a number of factors such as youth employment, affordable housing options for young people, adequate child care facilities for preschool children and the possibility to reconcile the work and family life. This requires concerted action of all relevant stakeholders in order to meet the standards of advanced development agenda also set and reflected through Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Allow me to underscore that the Croatian Government attaches great importance to preventive health care measures, counselling on reproductive health and family planning of adolescents and youth. Both preventive and curative health care of school children, young people and full-time students in Croatia is provided through services provided for by Croatia's public health institutes pursuant to the Health Care Act and the Plan and Programme of Health Care Measures for school children and university students.

By way of conclusion Mr. Chairman,

I would like to use this opportunity to share with the Commission some best practices deriving from successful measures in the context of youth employment. The new measure of *On the Job Training for Professionals without Employment*, as part of Croatia's national plan for employment promotion, was successfully introduced in 2011. Under this nation-wide initiative, 3166 people under the age of 24 had the opportunity to gain relevant working experience in 2011.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.