



Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

45th session of the Commission on Population and Development

**Agenda item 5: General debate on the contribution of population
and development issues to the theme of the annual ministerial review in 2012**

25 April 2012

Mr Chair,

It is my pleasure to address the Commission on Population and Development on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The acceding country Croatia*, the candidate countries Turkey, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland** and Serbia*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Mr Chair,

We look forward to the Annual Ministerial Review focused on “Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving the MDGs” and are ready to actively contribute to the preparatory process.

The lack of employment growth is the weakest link of the economic recovery. Worldwide, unemployment rates are very high among young people (aged 15 to 24), and women continue to suffer discrimination in terms of the jobs available to them, their remuneration, benefits and working conditions, and access to decision-making positions.

Young people often have limited access to quality education, productive employment and decent work and lack access to information, commodities and services to make informed choices related to their sexual and reproductive health. Investments in education, including comprehensive sexuality education, health, including sexual and reproductive health, and livelihoods of young people are, therefore, essential for them to achieve their full potential and contribute to sustainable development. Further efforts to promote the interests of adolescents and youth, increased and meaningful participation of youth and youth-led

* Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

** Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and the European Economic Area.

organizations in the formulation of local, national, regional and international development strategies and policies is of utmost importance.

Mr Chair,

The European Union and its Member States affirm its determination to give priority attention to addressing the challenges that hinder young people's development, of both girls and boys, by investing further in the development of human capital, especially education, health, including sexual and reproductive health, livelihoods skills and employment of youth, in order to achieve poverty eradication, the realization of human rights and gender equality, the promotion of sustained, equitable and inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

A steady raise in women's educational levels and participation in the labour market within the European Union is one of the great achievements in the field of gender equality. These positive changes have however not been sufficiently balanced by family-friendly policies that would make it easier for women and men to have children and combine this with their employment and career. Today EU Member States increasingly pay more attention to develop family-friendly policies which have an important influence on individual's decisions on having children. Some of these policies may benefit other areas as well, like the effect working from home on easing traffic congestion. Overall, family-friendly policies are contributing to a healthy re-assessment of roles and responsibilities of men and women, be it regarding care for children or regarding the breadwinner position. In many countries, it is the individuals (mothers, fathers, and partners) who are leading the way by working out a balance which suits them. Such tailor-made solutions are inspiring, to young people especially. Employers invest in policies that enable a satisfactory work-life balance because they know this is an investment that pays off.

Mr Chair,

We would like to underline that mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all development efforts, the full participation of women, including young women in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life, as equal partners, and their access to all resources needed for the full exercise of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms by removing persistent barriers, including ensuring equal access to full and productive employment and decent work, as well as strengthening their economic independence are critical for achieving sustainable development and for efforts to combat hunger, poverty and diseases.

Let me conclude, Mr Chair,

by saying that we must improve and actively support opportunities for young people to gain access to productive employment and decent work, including investment in youth employment programmes, youth-adult partnerships and public-private partnerships, in accordance with agreed international labor standards, and to reinforce links between policies on education, training, social integration and mobility to eradicate poverty and thus contribute to achieving MDGs.