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# PORTUGAL

**Statement by  
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Attaché  
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**45<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission of Population and  
Development  
Agenda Item 4: General debate on national experience in  
population matters: adolescents and youth**

**New York, 24 April, 2012**

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Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time that Portugal takes the floor in this session of the Commission on Population and Development, allow me to congratulate you, and the rest of the Bureau, for your election.

I take this opportunity, at the outset of this discussion on national experiences in population matters, to reiterate our support for the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo, in 1994, as well as the key actions adopted at the ICPD+5, approved in 1999 and the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Regarding the main theme of this session, Portugal would also like to recall its firm commitment to the development and implementation of policies and programmes related to adolescents and youth. Our goal is to develop youth policies that are cross-sectoral, comprehensive and formulated with a long-term vision which are coupled with action plans that take into consideration, *inter alia*, the guidelines set forth in the World Programme of Action for Youth (adopted by the General Assembly in 1995 and supplemented in 2007).

Portugal reiterates its support for The Program of Action for Youth and for the implementation of its 15 priority areas which are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, dealing with critical themes including employment, environment, education and health. The implementation of the WPAY is of crucial importance for Portugal. This requires the full enjoyment by young people of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and also requires that Governments “take effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms and promote non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, with full respect for various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions of their young people, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and participation of all young women and men”.

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal has identified several priority action areas for youth development: (1) increasing the quality of education, in order to foster equal opportunities for future generations; (2) motivating young persons’

citizenship participation in their communities; (3) reinforcing specific measures to fight young persons' unemployment by stimulating social and economic entrepreneurship; (4) preventing juvenile delinquency and promoting access to health and leisure, including by enhancing the competences of teachers and other educational professional for diagnosis and support of young persons' health and well being.

Regarding the prevention of juvenile delinquency and the promotion of access to health and leisure, we note that our youth programmes and policies highlight priorities in youth health by ensuring better nutrition, promoting physical activity, preventing substance misuse and unplanned pregnancy towards a healthier lifestyle. Today, a multiplicity of organizational models for youth-friendly health service provision exists within our national health service. In this field, Portugal supports the principle of voluntary choice in family planning.

The difficult economic circumstances experienced around the world are often compounded for adolescents and youth. Their access to education and training, to health and social services, to culture and leisure, and decent work can be limited by their social and economic circumstances. In this sense, we recognize adolescents and youth can constitute a vulnerable group. Special attention must be given to girls and young women but also to young people with disabilities, street children, as well as indigenous and migrant youth. Discrimination, neglect, negligent cultural attitudes and practices as well as gender biased education processes reinforce gender inequalities. To fight these inequalities, Governments must implement their obligations under the core human rights instruments but also the Platform for action of the Beijing Conference and the ICPD.

Therefore, Portugal's national youth plan also includes the following:

1. Promoting education in all its aspects, including functional literacy and life-long learning, thereby facilitating the integration of adolescents and youth into the labour market. Education is a key factor in sustainable development. Low levels of education not only have severe consequences for the adolescents concerned, but also high economic and social costs for society as a whole. Tackling early school leaving, which is higher among boys, is also a priority of our Government.

2. Despite the current challenging national situation, we are making all efforts to create more jobs for youth and recognize the central role of youth employment in facilitating the transition from school to work, thereby reducing crime and drug consumption and ensuring social cohesion. In this sense, Portugal warmly welcomed the EU Statement on the Crisis pronounced at the last ILO Governing Body, which calls on the ILO to play an important role in this field, as well as the last United Nations Report on Youth.

3. Developing sustained economic growth to improve the quality of life of present and future generations, as well as promote social justice and help eradicate poverty.

4. Offering adequate training in modern communication techniques and in media literacy, as they have an impact on youth and their behaviour.

Improving the level of participation of adolescents and youth in society and their contribution to the definition of policies concerning them is also a priority for our Government. Indeed, this is a reflection of our understanding that adolescents and youth enjoy full citizenship and are actors of social and cultural change.

Mr. Chairman,

Our commitment to youth issues at the national and international level is not new. I am pleased to recall that from 7-12 August, 1998, a World Conference concerning young people was hosted by Portugal under the auspices of the United Nations.

This World Conference for Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon, was the first of its kind and of great importance for the enhancement of young people's concerns in the world today.

The Lisbon Conference was connected with a World Youth Forum of the United Nations Systems, held in Braga, from 2 to 7 August, 1998. This forum was attended by delegates from youth and student movements and organisations, and resulted in the Braga Youth Action Plan and the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes.

The adoption of the Lisbon Declaration, in which Governments agreed to develop cross-sectoral national youth policies and operational programmes in such areas as youth education, employment, health and drug prevention, was the culmination of a more than decade-long effort to raise youth policy to a level of importance on both the national and international agendas and will catalyze the development of national and global actions in support of youth. Indeed, it was on the basis of a recommendation made by the First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth that the United Nations General Assembly declared the 12<sup>th</sup> of August as International Youth Day.

Mr. Chairman,

The II National Forum of Young Descendants of Immigrants and of the African Diaspora took place in Portugal, in February 2011. This meeting was organised by the Portuguese Youth Institute in cooperation with the African Diaspora Youth Network in Europe and the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. This activity, which bridges both the youth and migration themes of the ICPD, falls under the Portuguese Cooperation Policy.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to conclude by stressing the importance of our Governments and societies to respond more effectively to the economic, social, educational, emotional and cultural needs of adolescents and youth. All countries should give high priority to the protection, and development of adolescents and youth, and make every effort to eliminate the adverse effects of poverty on adolescents and youth. The effective participation of adolescents and youth in society is of critical importance. They bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account to promote tolerance, increased cooperation and development of societies in which they live.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.