



Statement by
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to the United Nations

on behalf of the Arab Group
before the Forty-Fifth Session of the Commission on Population and Development

**Agenda item 4: "General Debate on National Experiences Relating to Population
Matters: Adolescents and Youth"**

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Mr. Chair

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Arab Group. At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the chairmanship of the Commission on Population and Development. The Arab Group trusts your wise moderating of the current session will contribute to the success of its work. The Group emphasizes on the importance of the current session's main theme "Adolescents and Youth" and looks forward to constructive and fruitful discussions in this regard during the session. The Group extends its sincere appreciation to the Secretariat for the efforts made in the preparation of the documents and all related organizational matters.

The Arab Group acknowledges the important role that adolescents and youth can play in achieving development and economic growth of their communities, particularly in developing countries. The Group believes that, in order to strengthen this role, there is a need to define first a specific age range for both groups, especially within the United Nations to ensure that the programs and strategies respond to the factual needs of each age group, bearing in mind that this age range varies from a country to another and from a culture to another.

On the other hand, according to the main principles of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Group stresses on the need for full respect for various religious, ethical and societal values of states, as well as their sovereign right, in their implementation of their national programs related to adolescents and youth, in line with their national laws and development priorities. The Group emphasizes its commitment to the work of the Commission on Population and Development in discussing social issues related to population. However it strongly rejects any attempts to impose concepts, ideas or values related to social issues, including individual behavior, that are opposed to its value system, while they are, at the same time, outside the internationally recognized human rights framework.

Mr. Chair

The Arab Group stresses on the right to education, and the need for its full realization, as a necessity for human development, sustainable development, world peace, the promotion of all human rights, including the right to development, as well as the provision of quality education for children, youth and adults in order to develop knowledge and skills the peoples and nations need for their progress. Therefore, there is a need to adopt additional measures to improve the quality of education and to ensure positive results for all in the field of learning, especially for children and youth, including the right of girls to education at all levels. The Group also stresses that sex education for children must be in line with accurate information and the mental and age evolving capacities of both girls and boys, and in accordance with the direction and guidance of parents or legal guardians, and consistent with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Youth comprise the largest age group among Arab populations, as they represent more than one third of the total population of the Arab region. However, they face the biggest challenge in the field of employment and decent and productive work. The region has witnessed an increase in youth unemployment rates in recent years, according to last UN reports. In this sense, the Group emphasizes on the need to give priority to strengthening the creative potential of adolescents and youth, in view of their central role in development and economic growth, as well as increasing investments in their education, livelihood skills and work in order to eradicate poverty and promote sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

Furthermore, the Arab Group stresses the utmost importance of addressing the high rates of youth unemployment, including underemployment and informal employment through the development and implementation of integrated national policies aiming at youth employment and the creation of comprehensive job opportunities, as well as the improvement and development of their skills and vocational training to meet specific needs of the labor market of youth. In this regard, the Arab Group stresses the importance of developing a global strategy to address the high levels of unemployment especially among youth, according to the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on youth in July 2011.

Mr. Chair

The Arab Declaration for youth empowerment within the framework of the Arab League is a guiding document, and a key reference for the preparation of national and regional policies aimed at empowering youth and strengthening their participation in development efforts and in the population development strategies. The establishment of the Arab Observatory for youth within the League of Arab States, in implementation of the decision of the summit of Arab leaders in Khartoum in 2006, aims at activating the strategic directions of Arab Declaration for youth empowerment. It is also an important platform to enable the youth acquire knowledge and skills and to establish a specific, clear and common vision regarding their issues and priorities. It is worth noting also in this regard the existing cooperation

between the Arab countries and United Nations entities to promote youth empowerment and to prepare comprehensive national strategies aimed at developing their abilities and knowledge, enhancing their ability to contribute to the national development of their communities, encouraging their participation in the regional and international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015, as well as awareness campaigns on issues related to public health, prevention of infectious diseases, the fight against smoking and drug addiction, and issues relating to work and employment.

Mr. Chair

The Arab Group expresses its deep concern for the deteriorating political situation and economic and social development of the Palestinian people, especially young people as a result of the continuous policies and illegal practices of Israel, the occupying Power, which violate international law in the Israeli occupied Arab and Palestinian lands, including East Jerusalem. There is no doubt that the continuous Israeli military occupation of Arab and Palestinian lands and the escalating repression, killings, arrests, the confiscation of lands and buildings and home demolitions and expanding Israeli settlements, and increasing the barriers and checkpoints, in addition to the escalation of violence and terrorism by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, contribute to deteriorating conditions of Palestinians, especially young people. This tragic situation requires the international community to redouble efforts and take effective steps to end the Israeli occupation and to achieve independence and freedom for the Palestinian people, in order to create a healthy environment that enables youth of Palestine and of the other Israeli occupied Arab lands, realize all their fundamental and inalienable rights, like all other peoples of the world, in order to play a vital role in building and developing their communities.

Finally, Mr. Chair, the Arab Group hopes that the negotiations on the draft resolution entitled "Adolescents and Youth" will end up with a balanced document that takes into account the age range for the two groups of adolescents and youth, their actual needs, as well as the obligations of member states in this context, according to their development priorities, and in line with the work of the Commission on Population and Development, including the respect for religious and cultural backgrounds of member states consistent with their national legislations in this regard.

I thank you, Mr. Chair