



**"53<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT"**

**National statement**

**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands  
to the United Nations**

**NEW YORK, 15 July 2020**

The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Following are some remarks of importance to my delegation.

The Netherlands thanks the Chair, the Bureau members and the Secretariat for their efforts to guide us through an unprecedented 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Despite not having the usual in-person exchange regarding the progress and challenges for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of its reviews, we appreciate the attempt to bring us together around a short and focused declaration on the critical theme: *Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

We are deeply disappointed by the lack of agreement on this declaration, and the lack of agreement on having a chair's summary to reflect the deliberations included in the final report of the Commission. This hampers an effective joint response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The world today faces an unprecedented challenge, with the COVID-19 virus taking its toll; and with the impact of the broader crisis affecting all aspects of life and society. We see poverty, food insecurity, hunger and inequalities increase. We also see years of gains with regards to improving access to health, education and gender equality lost.

As a result of hampered access to essential and life-saving sexual and reproductive health services, unplanned and adolescent pregnancies, unsafe abortions, HIV infections and aids-related deaths increase.

It is predicted that due to the COVID-19 crisis tens of thousands additional women will die<sup>1</sup> from entirely preventable causes, such as maternal mortality. Millions more girls threaten to face harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital cutting/mutilation<sup>2</sup>. An unacceptable, yet largely avoidable toll.

In these times of crisis, we need to act strongly and united, by overcoming our differences and by keeping our eyes on the people and their human rights we need to respect, protect and fulfill.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands stood ready to agree on a short and focused declaration, building on 26 years of agreement as defined in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We reiterate our support to the joint ministerial press release on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2020: *Protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights and promoting gender-responsiveness in the COVID-19 Crisis*, together with nearly 60 other governments. And we hope for the support of many others.

We look forward to the full and extensive discussions and negotiations on *Population, food security and sustainable development* at the 54<sup>th</sup> session of this Commission next year and will continue our constructive contribution towards a successful outcome.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30229-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30229-1/fulltext)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unfpa.org/swop>