

**Statement of the Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations
after the adoption of the resolution on the**

**“Assessment of the Status of Implementation of the Programme of Action of
the International Conference on Population and Development”**

**47th session of the Commission on Population and Development of the
United Nations Economic and Social Council**

New York, 12 April 2014

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is convinced that only a truly human-centered approach to development can function as the authentic starting point for policy on population and development. Through its unparalleled global network of institutions, the Holy See unceasingly manifests its commitment to serving the poorest and most vulnerable populations in working to achieve their integral human development. This includes physical, social, and spiritual development – keeping the focus on those most essential factors for development, including: quality and affordable education and health care, access to food and nutrition, water and sanitation, the rights of migrants, as well as policies that support the family as the fundamental and most basic contributors of this development.

My delegation acknowledges with thanks your efforts and those of your bureau and the Secretariat for all the hard work during this Commission. The resolution just adopted contains many helpful contributions for advancing integral human development, and we are appreciative to you for including quite a number of our proposals. However, as already expressed on several occasions by many delegations, including my own, the balance of this resolution remains heavily skewed towards peculiar interests of certain developed countries, as evidenced by undue emphasis on selected rights *over* the real development priorities consistently elaborated by major regional groups, particularly those from developing regions.

I refer in particular to the heavy focus on sexual or reproductive mores. In this regard, the Holy See requests that its reservations on the following paragraphs be formally entered into the record of this meeting: PP16, OP9 and 9bis, OP10 and OP11.

- With reference to “sexual and reproductive health”, so-called “reproductive rights,” “family planning” and other language on which the Holy See has registered reservations at Cairo, we reiterate these reservations as set out more fully in the Report of the ICPD. In particular, the ICPD rejects recourse to abortion for family planning, denies that it creates any new rights in this regard and recognizes that this is a matter

subject to national legislation. Abortion is always gravely illicit and can never be called safe for the child who is killed or the mother who is brutalized. Yesterday Pope Francis publicly condemned yet again what he calls this “*unspeakable crime*” in the following terms: “[F]rom the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care.” “Therefore,” the Pope pleaded, “it is necessary to reaffirm our strongest opposition to any direct offence against life, especially ... the unborn child in its mother's womb.”

- With respect to so-called “education” or “counselling” on “sexuality”, we reaffirm the “primary responsibility” and the “prior rights” of parents, including their right to religious freedom, when it comes to the education and upbringing of their children, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which we are a State Party.
- By “gender” my delegation understands to mean “male or female” only, and to have no meaning other than the customary and general usage of the term.

We also were disappointed by the methods of work that led to this resolution. What was promised to be a concise, procedural approach without renegotiation of the issues ballooned into a partisan substantive jamboree during a week in which very little time was set aside for actual multilateral negotiations. We regret that the series of general comments for which we were solicited never matured into a full and robust negotiation of a true compilation text. We share the concerns expressed by the distinguished delegate from Bangladesh and others regarding the transparency and inclusivity of this final session. This manner of proceeding should not serve as a precedent for future Commissions.

We ask that the text of this statement be included in the official records of this meeting.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.