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**REMARKS TO THE 47TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

New York, 7 April 2014

**Mr. President,
Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
USG, Executive Director,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am delighted to be here to address this important session of the Commission on Population and Development. We meet two decades after the historic International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994.

The issues that you deal with here are very close to my heart. I will deliver a message to you from Secretary-General Ban-ki Moon but will first make some personal observations.

My own country, Sweden, is sometimes used as a measure of progress on population and development matters. But, in fact, I can well remember a very different Sweden from what we see today – and this gives me hope for countries striving to advance.

Eighty years ago, Sweden was one of the poorest countries in Europe. Poverty was widespread. My own aunt died young of tuberculosis. Pregnant women rightly feared death in childbirth.

As we know, the vast majority of today's maternal deaths occur in poor countries. As global citizens, we must not tolerate preventable deaths when we have the means to stop them.

My earlier work dealing with emergencies led me to advocate for the Millennium Development Goals, especially the ones related to clean water and sanitation.

At the same time, I have joined many of you on the frontlines in the campaign for gender equality. I will never forget the women and girls I have met in conflict zones who lived in terror of rape and other forms of sexual violence. I am also from these experiences acutely aware that a lack of simple sanitary facilities keeps far too many girls in our world out of school.

The ICPD marked a major turning point in our historic push for people-centred development.

Allow me now to share with you the message of the Secretary-General to this session.

Twenty years ago, the landmark International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo placed individuals' rights and dignity at the heart of development. With the ICPD Programme of Action, governments set out an ambitious agenda to deliver inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

Over the past two decades, this agenda has contributed to significant advances. Fewer people are living in extreme poverty. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are gaining ground worldwide. More people are living longer, healthier lives. More girls are in school. Fewer women are dying in pregnancy and childbirth. There are more laws to protect and uphold human rights.

Yet, in the midst of this human progress, the continued exclusion of some groups and the potential for serious environmental damage put these gains at risk. Moreover, changing age, household and family structures as well as; rapid urbanization and migration pose new challenges for human development.

We have an urgent responsibility, to invest in creating opportunities and a supportive environment for innovation and entrepreneurship for persons of all ages, in particular for young people. It is crucial to invest in their health and education and to review legislation, standards and practices that restrict their full participation in and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

The review of implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action has revealed strong commitment among Member States to promote and protect sexual and reproductive health and rights to contribute to individual well-being and social justice in societies free from all forms of discrimination and violence. This includes harmful practices such as early and forced marriages and female genital mutilation.

The ICPD beyond 2014 review has advanced a new vision for addressing population and development challenges through the important lenses of dignity and human rights, health, security, governance, accountability, and sustainability.

The findings of the ICPD review show a broad consensus among Member States on key issues, as reflected in the negotiations on regional action plans. I am pleased that these regional action plans compellingly address the needs of all people and capture the links between individual well-being and sustained economic growth and development.

As we work to define a new inclusive, sustainable development framework beyond 2015, I am confident that the ICPD agenda grounded in principles of equality and rights will continue to guide and enrich our efforts.

I thank you and wish you a successful session.
