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STATEMENT BY

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COMMISSION FOR POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

47TH SESSION

**AGENDA ITEM 4 - GENERAL DEBATE ON NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN
POPULATION MATTERS: ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Republic of Poland I am honored to address the 47th session of the Commission on Population and Development, devoted to the “Assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development”. This session is an important opportunity to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development.

At the beginning, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election as President of the 47th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, and other members of the Bureau on their election.

Mr Chairman,

The ICPD Programme of Action constitutes a platform for the present and future activity for the Polish Government.

Poland is a European country with a substantial demographic potential with the total population amounting to 38.5 mln. Over the last 20 years, our country has faced serious demographic problems, such as a low number of births, relatively high mortality rates compared with Western European countries and shorter life expectancy than the average in the European Union. According to the forecasts of the Central Statistical Office, in 2030 the size of the population of Poland will have decreased by 1.3 million persons. Therefore, further negative changes in the age structure of the population and shortages on the labour market are to be expected. The forecast also points out the problem of stability of the social security system, which is further aggravated by mass economic migration of young Polish citizens undertaking the employment abroad, mainly in the EU countries. In 2013 the number of Poles abroad stood at 2.1 million which constitutes approx. 6% of the country's population, with the majority of them being in the mobile age (18-44 years).

The consequences of such significant population outflow in a short time are very complex and will most probably be noticeable in years to come.

For these reasons, on July 31 2012 the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland adopted a strategic document entitled: ***"Migration Policy of Poland – the Current State of Play and Further Actions"*** The main objective of the document is to adjust the migration policy priorities to the labour market needs, in order to ensure the competitiveness of the Polish economy.

To improve the situation, is crucial to increase fertility rate of the population in Poland, including through the reduction of costs of bringing up children, ensuring better conditions for reconciling professional and family functions. It is also necessary to make a maximum use of available labour resources through pension reforms, additional measures to facilitate combining studies and work and making use of the potential of people at retirement age. Population policy requires long-term actions by the state, which enjoy wide public support, and an interdisciplinary approach.

This postulate was also approved by the Committee of the Council of Ministers. The Government Population Council with the Central Statistical Office have organised the 2nd Demographic Congress ***“Poland in Europe – Demographic Future”***, held in 2012 under the honorary patronage of Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, the President of the Republic of Poland.

The Polish Government, with the active role of the Government Population Council, has prepared strategic documents to address these challenges. In 2011, the Expert Group prepared the assumptions of the action programme in the area of population policy ***Foundations of the Polish Population***

Policy, which was subject to debate and assessment by the Government Population Council, and by the 2nd Demographic Congress, 2012.

Distinguished Delegates,

The issues of equality between women and men, and empowerment of women are important elements of the ICPD Programme of Action. In Poland, the equal status of women and men is guaranteed in the Constitution. The promotion and protection of human rights, especially women's rights in Poland is the priority for the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment and non-governmental organizations. Poland's accession to the European Union on May 1, 2004, has resulted in changes in the Polish law. The Labour Code amendments, in force since 1 January 2004, harmonized labour law with the European Union Directives. Non-discriminatory legislation in Poland has been supplemented in the last decade with new legislative framework and international commitments.

Poland, like many other countries in the world, has been dedicated to combating violence. Promoting equality and empowering women to be independent and free in their choices should be the core of each national policy on combating violence. Such approach was the foundation of the Istanbul Convention of Council of Europe, which Poland has signed on 18th of December 2012, after a heated debate.

Many initiatives and legislative decisions important for combating violence have been taken in Poland recently. In 2010 we amended the law on combating family violence which prohibits corporal punishment and another one, which obliges the perpetrator, not the victim of violence, to move out from the house. Our latest achievement is the amendment of Penal Code and the change of the procedure of persecuting rape perpetrators into ex officio (till now everything has depended on the motion filed by the victim) as well as introducing new, safer interrogation procedures for rape victims. In December 2013 government adopted **National Action Plan on Equal Treatment 2013-2016**, in which counteracting gender based violence is an essential part.

In recent years we have also been working intensely on empowering and supporting independence of women. We have changed the provisions of Labor Code, Family Code, and electoral ordinance. Since 2010 we have had quotas on voting lists and in some political parties the number of women mandates has doubled. In the last 5 years Poland has seen a strong development of the women's movement. One of the biggest initiatives is the **Congress of Women**, which every year gathers thousands of Polish most dynamic, active and successful women leaders representing all the political parties and various social and economic circles. The Congress and its shadow cabinet monitors the government's activity and meets quarterly with the Polish Prime Minister to discuss significant issues, not limited to the "women's issues". The Polish government officially participates in national and international anti-violence initiatives, such as **"16 days against violence against women"** or **"Say NO – UNiTE to End Violence against Women"** or **"One billion rising"**.

Mr Chairman,

All Polish citizens, regardless of their social or economic situation, have the right to the health protection and have equal access to health care services financed with the public funds. The range and terms of providing health care services financed by the public funds, as well as the tasks for public authorities to ensure an equal access to these services are defined by law.

A special State protection is ensured to women in the period of pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum. The protection is provided both in the national legislation as well as in the international agreements

ratified by Poland. The article 68 (3) of the Constitution of Poland states that “Public authorities shall ensure special health care to children, pregnant women, disabled people and persons of advanced age”.

The reproductive health is an important part of the *State health policy*. Central government authorities as well as local government authorities provide citizens with a free access to methods and means of conscious procreation. Currently, in Poland there are modern contraceptives registered and accessible medical and medicinal products as well as drugs used during pregnancy and necessary for the fetus care or medical care over woman during pregnancy, and also used for the purpose of conscious procreation. In the last two decades, the range and availability of modern contraceptive methods have increased.

It is important to underline, that in our understanding any reference made to the sexual and reproductive health and rights does not constitute an encouragement to the promotion of abortion on request. According to Polish law abortion on request is illegal.

A particularly important programme in the field of reproductive health, is “*Programme – Infertility Treatment by In Vitro Fertilization for the period of 2013-2016*” it is aimed at ensuring couples with an identified male or female infertility an equal access to the in vitro fertilization, when all other methods of treatment remained result less or when other methods of treatment do not exist.

It is also worth mentioning that the school teaching programmes include a subject called *Education for family life*. Its learning content guarantees pluralism of opinions.

The attention given to the reproductive health and education is also reflected in data on pregnancy among minors. The number of births, when a mother was 19 years old or younger decreases systematically. In 2012 there were 15.791 such births, while in 2002 – 24.449.

When talking about reproductive health and development, the question of prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, cannot be overlooked. The Polish policy on HIV and AIDS is consistent with the recommendations and commitments contained in the ICPD Programme of Action. The Polish government expresses its commitment to achieve zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths - the vision that is in line with the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 2011-2015 Strategy “Getting to zero”. The key document is the, Regulation of the Council of Ministers of the 15th of February 2011, entitled: “*The National Program for Preventing HIV Infections and Combating AIDS*”. The National AIDS Centre of the Ministry of Health coordinates all the activities defined in the National Programme, that has been designed for the years 2012-2016.

The universal access to the antiretroviral (ARV) treatment, including for people at risk of marginalization, also prisoners, should be highlighted as one of the major Polish achievements. Such treatment is free of charge for all people who meet medical criteria.

Epidemiological studies clearly indicate the systematic improvement of the health status in Poland. There is a visible upward trend in the life expectancy, downward trend in overall mortality, as well as visible decline in infant mortality rates.

The maternal mortality rate together with the perinatal mortality rate as the principal indicators of society’s cultural and civilizational development, constitute crucial indicators of society’s state of health also in Poland. A positive trend that needs to be stressed, is a constant decrease in mortality among children between 1-14 years old. It is accompanied by the trend of decreasing infant mortality.

Nonetheless, Poland’s activities in the area of obstetric care are still fundamentally aimed at steadily reducing maternal, newborn and infant mortality rates. It is mainly achieved through creating a three-stage perinatal care system that perform functions related to managing network of collaborating

facilities, treating patients, providing consultations, ensuring the information flow, maintaining and coordinating transport of mothers and newborns, and educating.

The **National Health Program (NHP) 2007-2015**, focuses on the establishment of principal health policy directions in the country and creates opportunities for more effective implementation of the tasks related to the health of society. The fundamental step in achieving the NHP main goals is the active participation of governmental administration bodies, NGOs, and above all, local governments, local communities and the citizens themselves. The program refers, inter alia, to the World Health Declaration "Health 21 - Health for all in the 21st century" and the European Union programs in the field of public health.

The Minister of Health has undertaken a number of actions and implements numerous programmes aimed at raising public awareness of diseases of affluence and their risk factors.

Distinguished Delegates,

In order to improve the conditions for families, help parents achieve a better work-life balance and increase low fertility rate, the Polish government has adopted a series of measures since 2006, among them a one-time child birth grant. In June 2013 additional measures to support families came into force including: the extension of the *additional maternity leave* up to 6 weeks; the extension of *paternity leave* up to 2 weeks for father; the introduction of paid *parental leave* up to 26 weeks after using basic maternity leave and additional maternity leave. The parental leave could be used by both parents in the same time.

According to the Polish Labour Code, a person employed, for at least 6 months, is entitled to up to 36 months of *childcare leave* in order to provide personal care to a child under 5 years old. If a child is disabled – employee is entitled to additional period of childcare leave up to 36 months for a child under 18th birthday. Childcare leave is generally unpaid, but the low-income families are entitled to a flat monthly payment.

Since January 2014 young adults may qualify for government subsidy when buying their first home under in the "**Housing for the Young**" Program. Families with three or more children may qualify for additional government support not only to pay loan installments, but also to earlier repay their loan.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

Poland has been implementing the policy "State ecological policy" of sustainable development since social and economic transformations. The role of climate policy is the Polish contribution to efforts of the international community for the protection of global climate through implementing sustainable development principles, and treating the issue of climate changes, energy, sustainable development and economies gradually shifting towards low-emission, as one common problem.

Poland attaches great significance to environmental protection activities both at the national and international level through the implementation of climate policy at the European level and on the global forum. Poland hosted the 14th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change which took place parallel to the 4th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol to Poznań on December 2008. The Conference considerably contributed to achieving global agreement on climate protection activities after 2012.

The second United Nations Climate Change Conference hosted in Poland, was COP 19 (The 19th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, along with the 9th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol) that took place in Warsaw, November 2013, and was Europe's biggest political summit organised in Poland and in this part of

Europe. The Polish Presidency achieved a significant progress in negotiations during both Conferences and for the future agreement to efficiently contribute to fight climate change.

Thank you for your attention