



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

750 THIRD AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017

TEL. (212) 744-2506

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STATEMENT BY

MR. JAROSŁAW PINKAS

SECRETARY OF STATE

AT THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

COMMISSION FOR POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

49TH SESSION

**AGENDA ITEM 4 - GENERAL DEBATE ON NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN
POPULATION MATTERS: STRENGTHENING THE DEMOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE
BASE FOR THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

NEW YORK, 11TH APRIL 2016

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Republic of Poland I am honored to address the 49th session of the Commission on Population and Development on ***Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda***. This session is the first one following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for the sustainable development. Therefore our deliberation should be an important intellectual input towards its successful implementation in the Agenda's demography related issues.

At the beginning, let me congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election as President of the 49th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, and other members of the Bureau on their election.

Madam Chair,

The ICPD Programme of Action constitutes a platform for the present and future activity for the Polish Government. The population-related issues remain at the core of development, and demographic data are essential to achieve the objectives of the 2030 agenda.

Over the last 20 years, Poland has faced serious demographic problems, such as a low number of births and the decrease in fertility rate, which currently stands at 1,3 births per women, relatively high mortality rates compared with Western European countries and shorter life expectancy than the average in the European Union. According to the new forecasts of the Central Statistical Office, in 2030 the size of the population of Poland will have decreased by 1.3 million persons, followed by an increase in people over 60 years of age. 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 2014 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 (18-44years). The consequences of such significant population outflow in a short time are very complex and will most probably be noticeable in years to come.

In this situation, Poland is facing challenges which, include measures to improve the fertility of Polish women, limiting emigration of our citizens, creating conditions for their return as well as increasing the scale of labour immigration to Poland. While increasing fertility depends on the demographic policy instruments, which is of long-term character, migration is already part of the activities carried out by respective public administration institutions. They result from targeted immigration policy which, among others, defines the preferential legal regulations concerning the entry, stay and work in Poland for selected groups of migrants. The number of foreigners who held valid stay and residence permits, increased to almost 212,000 at the end of 2015. The increase is mainly due to the labour immigration from countries with the simplified system of admitting

foreigners based on employers' declarations to entrust work to a foreigner. In 2015, more than 782,000 employers' declarations were registered, mainly for citizens of Ukraine who dominate on the Polish labour market.

Population policy requires long-term actions by the state, which enjoy wide public support, and an interdisciplinary approach. The Government Population Council, has prepared strategic documents to address these challenges. 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, held in 2012.

Distinguished Delegates,

The current migration situation in Europe, as a result of which more than 1.2 million people arrived to the continent, constitutes an unprecedented challenge for national and European institutions, politicians, media and societies. The unprecedented migration crisis has an impact on the situation of our country, and Poland cannot remain indifferent towards it. Poland is strongly committed to the admission of more than seven thousand refugees under the EU resettlement and relocation scheme, which is a concrete demonstration of solidarity with the EU Member States most affected by the migration crisis. In December 2015 Poland appointed National Relocation Focal Point and liaison officers to support the Border Guard in implementing relocation process. The liaison officers already work in the hotspots in Italy and Greece. In 2016, as a result of the annual bilateral discussions with the Frontex Agency, Polish Border Guard is committed to organizing 39 missions to protect the EU borders. In 2015, the Action Plan for the Border Guard in the event of a mass influx of migrants over the southern border of Poland was drafted. These actions are aimed at increasing the safety of our citizens and strengthening protection at the eastern border, which is also the external border of the Schengen area. It is a safe border at the moment, although migratory pressures associated with the conflict in Ukraine and economic problems in the post-Soviet region are increasingly noticeable.

Madam Chair,

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 and non-governmental organizations. Non-discriminatory legislation in Poland has been supplemented in the last decade with new legislative framework and international commitments.

Many initiatives and legislative decisions important for combating violence have been taken in Poland recently. Our achievement is the amendment of Penal Code and the change of the procedure of persecuting rape 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.

Distinguished Delegates,

The post-2015 era opens new chapter of possibilities and actions to accelerate and sustain development. In order to counteract the observed negative demographic transitions – including rapid ageing of the population and low fertility there are many actions within the public health and healthcare system domains, which should contribute to improve the situation. In Poland everyone has the **right for health** protection, all Polish citizens, regardless of their social or economic situation, have equal access to health care services financed by the public funds. The range of these services is defined by law. The results of epidemiological studies clearly indicate a systematic improvement in the health of Poles. There is a rising trend in life expectancy, the decline in overall mortality, the decline in mortality from most causes, and in infant mortality.

Currently in Poland there is an ongoing debate on **public health** and its crucial role for economic and social development of state. New legal frames were established by the Act of 11th September 2015 on public health. It opens a new chapter in approach to the health and quality of life of society connected with it. It is also a reply to the need for constant counteraction against negative epidemiological trends and increasing chronic and non-communicable diseases and disabilities in society. Moreover the Act on public health introduces coordination mechanisms to reinforce leadership in public health and increase efficiency.

Basing on the Act on public health, the *National Health Programme for period 2016-2020* is being currently prepared. This strategic Programme is to support the existing health care system funded from the public budget and focused primarily on treatment of diseases with less attention given to preventive interventions. The Program attributes a more prominent role to publicly funded health promotion, preventive interventions and the concept of health in all public policies. Moreover the *National Health Programme* identifies operational objectives which contribute to the overall strategic objective, what is increasing life expectancy, improving health and health related quality of life and reducing social inequalities in health.

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland ensures special protection by the State over pregnant women. **Reproductive health** is a crucial element of the State health policy. Central and local government administration bodies provide citizens with a free access to methods and means of conscious procreation. During the last two decades, the range and availability of modern contraceptive methods have increased. The research on women's expectations as regards contraception indicates that primary factors determining the choice of a method are effectiveness, lack of adverse side effects, reversibility, and acceptance. The Government of Poland strives to provide women during pregnancy and at labor with the best health services that match their expectations and the medical knowledge. The protection of women in the period of pregnancy, labor and postpartum is ensured in the national legislation and in international

agreements ratified by Poland. Ministry of Health has undertaken many initiatives aimed at strengthening reproductive health of the population. The most important are: promoting reproductive health and preventing fertility impairment, especially connected with lifestyle; establishing the reference network of highly specialized healthcare providers that diagnose and treat infertility. In recent months, the Ministry of Health created a special unit - Division of Reproductive Health, which in a comprehensive way will address issues the of reproductive health.

Poland is a low **HIV / AIDS** prevalence country, with stable epidemiological situation. Since the beginning of the epidemic until present there have been about 20 thousand HIV infections detected in Poland. The number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the country is estimated around 30-35 thousand. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of infections among men who have sex with men (MSM). All HIV positive patients, including these at risk of marginalization e.g. incarcerated or homeless people are covered by high efficacy ARV treatment program being implemented as part of the national strategy on preventing HIV infections and combating AIDS. Thanks to this strategy Poland has achieved a significant decrease in the number of AIDS cases. Moreover, patients with HIV live longer and enjoy a higher quality of life, which enables them to re-establish their social and family lives.

The Programme of Action on Population and Development adopted in Cairo in 1994, as well as the objectives within the Millennium Development Goals terminated in 2015, and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, have influenced the continuing progress in the field of public health. As an example, a holistic approach towards epidemic-related issues, reflected in unconditional accessibility to advanced ARV treatment, care and support services provided in our country. Since the very beginning, a free-of-charge services have been offered to people living with HIV in Poland. More than three decades after the beginning of the epidemic, HIV/AIDS continues to be one of the major threats for global public health. Despite of the advances in combating the epidemic, the HIV remains burning issue for post-2015 development agenda, namely SDGs.

Madam Chair,

Since 2008, in Poland, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has been going down. In 2014, the figure stood at 9,337 thousand. **A different picture of poverty is painted by an analysis of the scale of extreme poverty and child poverty.** The household budgets surveys demonstrate that in 2014 7.4% of Poland's inhabitants lived in extreme poverty (ca. 2.8 million). From 2004 to 2012, Poland saw **a significant drop in the population of children simultaneously experiencing material deprivation, low labour intensity (in a household) and poverty** – from 483,000 in 2004 to 131,000 in 2012. At the same time, **population of children living in extreme poverty** rose from 640,000 to 715,000. In Poland, **children living in villages are particularly at risk of poverty**, and those having **poorly educated parents**. The analysis of the economic and social

situation of families in Poland shows that the lowest income was earned by couples with 3 or more children (PLN 807).

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. The family benefits system offers different forms of aid for families, including large families and single parents. In addition, in 2016 the government introduced **parental benefit** of PLN 1,000 per month for people who are not eligible for maternity allowance or maternity pay (e.g. unemployed persons, undergraduates, persons working under civil-law contracts) or compensation for the already received maternity allowance or maternity pay to reach this amount if the amount arising from other regulations were lower (e.g. farmers). Parental benefits would be paid for 52 weeks after a single or multiple birth irrespective of income.

On 1st April 2016, “**Family 500 Plus**” programme was introduced, which provides **child-raising allowance** of PLN 500 per month for families for the second and each subsequent child for children aged 0 to 18, starts. The support is intended for the first child if the family income is no more than PLN 800 per capita (PLN 1,200 if there is a disabled child). Allowance in the amount of the child-raising benefit will be due regardless of income for each child up to the age of 18 placed in foster care, substitute family home and the family childcare facility. As part of the tax system, the main tool supporting families with children in Poland is the **tax relief for children, introduced in 2007**. Since 1 December 2015, **Large Family Cards supporting large families** were issued. According to the estimates, ultimately ca. **3.4 million of large family members** will be able to use the cards.

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.

Distinguished Delegates,

In the last quarter-century Poland has turned from the centrally planned economy to a market economy. It is a member of the WTO, NATO and OECD. It has gone through a process of integration within the EU structures. Additionally, the EU funds allow for the development of the Polish economic and social potential.

Medium-term challenges, resulting from internal conditions and the external environment require action boosting socio-economic development of Poland. These challenges include, among others, lack of a sufficiently strong domestic capital, the

existing perception of business, by the companies, through the prism of the lowest prices or the negative demographic trends. In view of this fact, as well as in the face of the depletion of existing growth factors, Poland needs a new model of economic development.

Given the current conditions and the needs of socio-economic development of the country and the challenges facing by Poland, the **Responsible Development Plan** (adopted by the Council of Ministers on 16 February 2016 r.) has been prepared. The plan envisages **the output of the five development traps** (middle income trap, lack of balance, average product, demographic trap, and weak institutions) through implementing **a new model of development**, based on five pillars: *reindustrialization; development of innovative companies; capital for development; foreign expansion; sustainable social and regional development*. **Sustainable social and regional development** means emphasis on inclusion in the development process, not only large urban areas but also the smaller towns and rural areas. The basis for the responsible development of Poland, which affects all pillars is **efficient state**. The responsible development is not only basing economic growth on **a solid foundation of economy**, but also **a multi-dimensional social solidarity** - between present and future generations, between regions, cities and rural areas or between employers and employees - the source of which is the concern for the common good .

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.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poland is at a crucial stage in its development, and is an excellent example as to how transformative and inclusive approach to population issues can mobilize all segments of society to determine the country's sustainable population and development strategy and its subsequent implementation.

Polish delegation firmly believes that in order to provide reliable demographic data we should strengthen the demographic evidence base for the 2030 development Agenda, both at the international and national levels.

Thank you for your attention

