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General Debate

Statement by H.E. Mr. Geir O. Pedersen
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Thank you, Chair,

The extent to which we as a world community succeeds in dealing with the challenges related to changing age structures is of utmost importance for reaching the objectives we have set ourselves in the 2030 Agenda. The background papers for this year's session provide us with important assessments and valuable recommendations in this regard.

The reports convincingly lay out the rationale for countries with high fertility to adopt policies supporting universal access to sexual and reproductive health services. Investments in family planning can be very effective and may greatly increase the possibility to reach other development goals, too. More efforts are needed to meet the current needs of 225 million people for family planning, including young people, in developing countries.

(Check against delivery)

Secondly, investments in young people's education and health may increase a society's ability to attain the demographic dividend, as well as building a strong generation that may remain healthy and productive for a long time – thus curbing long term ageing challenges. Productive, decent and sustainable jobs are also crucial in order to harvest demographic dividends and curb future ageing challenges.

Since women usually outlive men, most elderly people are women hence a gender perspective is important to secure a safe old age. We also need to address the strain that particularly women may experience if they are expected to perform productive work, take care of both old parents and perhaps also children.

Good data are essential to be able to monitor the changing age structures. Investments in data collection and processing are investments in a better fundament for good priorities, and timely and appropriately designed policies.

Chair,

Population policies will not be complete without a strong human rights perspective. In this regard, the ICPD program of action remains as valid as ever. Much has been achieved since its adoption, but much also remains to be done. One example is maternal mortality, where critical challenges persist. We should learn from countries that have performed above expectations with regard to improved maternal health, including by liberalizing their legislation on abortion.

On this background, Norway would like to propose the inclusion of access to safe and legal abortion in this year's resolution.

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Furthermore, we still think there are some gaps in the normative framework, which we should try to correct. Specifically, the absence of any explicit reference to sexual rights in the Cairo document seems to us unfinished business. We propose to make good on this omission in this 50th session of the CPD.

To conclude, I would like to draw your attention to the National Voluntary Presentation that Norway will make on Wednesday, and which will highlight our own experiences in implementing the Programme of Action of the ICPD.

Thank you.