



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

750 THIRD AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017

TEL. (212) 744-2506

STATEMENT BY

Ms. ALINA POTRYKOWSKA

SECRETARY GENERAL

OF THE GOVERNMENT POPULATION COUNCIL

OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

COMMISSION FOR POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

50TH SESSION

**AGENDA ITEM 3: GENERAL DEBATE: ACTIONS FOR THE FURTHER
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT AT
THE GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS**

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Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Republic of Poland I am honored to address the 50th session of the Commission on Population and Development on ***Changing population age structures and sustainable development.***

At the beginning, let me congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election as President of the 50th 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 are essential to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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. Observed and predicted changes are then manifested in an increasing percentage of elderly people in the society, along with a decreasing percentage of young persons 0–17 years old. The life expectancy is increasing. In 2015 people aged 60 and older constituted almost 23% of the population in Poland. Problems related to demographic changes caused by changes in the proportions of age in society and by depopulation can be seen in the entire country. Predicted changes indicate that in 2050, in comparison to the end of 2014, the number of citizens in Poland will have fallen by 4,5 million. Given this situation, it is simultaneously predicted that the number of people aged 60 and above may increase in 2050 to 13,7 million and that the percentage of elderly people in the Polish population is going to increase systematically – to 40%. Ageing of Polish population is demonstrated by a high proportion of senior citizens and also by the dynamics of the proportion. 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 2015 the number of Poles abroad stood at 2.3 million which constitutes approx. 6% of the country's population, with the majority of them being in the procreative and 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.

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 (Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine). In 2016, more than 1 314 127 employers' declarations were registered, mainly for citizens of Ukraine who dominate on the Polish labour market

The Sustainable Development Strategy, which has been recently adopted by the Polish government, emphasises the importance of attracting to the Polish labour market migrant workers with desired skills, in light of the diminishing labour resources in Poland

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 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 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 and its operational policy paper - the *National Health Programme for 2016-2020*. It opens a new chapter in approach to the health and health-related quality of life of society. 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. The *National Health 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, including **reproductive health**, and reducing social inequalities in health. Bearing in mind that the infant mortality rate together with the perinatal mortality rate are one of the principal indicators of society's cultural and civilizational development, they also constitute in Poland crucial indicators of society's state of 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 undertaken within National Health Programme; establishing the reference network of highly specialized healthcare providers that diagnose and treat infertility. A significant initiative worth to be mentioned in this field is the **Programme for complex protection of reproductive health in Poland 2016-2020**. This is a health policy programme established by the Minister of 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 21 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.

Madam Chair,

. Supporting the family in its role as the caregiver is an important aspect of the **family policy**. 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, 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. 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.

The family policy is implemented by enabling the parents to choose the way of providing care to the youngest children, from among institutional care (nurseries, children's clubs or day carers) and non-institutional care (family members). The availability of institutional care continues to increase. At present, based on the data from the nursery and children's club register and the day carers register, there are approx. 3.6 thous. institutional care facilities (nurseries, children's clubs, day carers), which offer approx. 98.9 thous. places. It is estimated that institutional care, including nannies, is provided to approx. 9.7% of children under the age of 3.

However the needs in this area are still significant. The *Departmental Programme for the Development of Institutions of Care for Children Under the Age of 3 “Maluch” (“Toddler”) 2017*, is aimed at financing the establishing and operation of new childcare facilities, as well as supporting the existing ones. The amount of PLN 151 mln has been allocated for the Programme implementation in 2017. It is estimated that approx. 12 thous. of new childcare facilities will be established and approx. 43 thous. of existing ones will receive support for day-to-day operation.

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.

The *Family 500 Plus Programme* has contributed to the improvement of the living standards of families who receive the benefits, and to a decrease in the poverty and income inequality rates, which allowed the families to enjoy greater financial security. An increase in consumption related to a better financial standing of families can also be observed. In the period from 1 April 2016 to 31 January 2017, Polish families received support amounting to PLN 19.3 bn by means of child benefits, child benefits supplements and lump-sum supplements. It is also worth noting that 50% of families receiving benefits for the first child (761.6 thous. families) earn income of no more than PLN 400.00 per family member. The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has been going down.

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

Distinguished Delegates,

Poland is closer to achieving its national objective regarding the 71% employment rate to be achieved in 2020, as set out in the Europe 2020 strategy. The European Commission has noticed the favourable tendencies prevailing in the Polish labour market, as a positive finding included in *National Report. Poland 2017*. A positive signal is that the number of employed persons increases year on year, whereas with the unemployment rate continues to fall, which positively affects the employment and unemployment rates. In December 2016, the harmonised unemployment rate in Poland (for people aged 15-74) was 5.9% against 8.2% in the EU(28). What is more, the unemployment rate among young people is dropping. In December 2016, the unemployment rate reached at 17.5% among people aged 15-24 which was a more favourable figure than the EU average of 18.6%. In this time 16.3 mln Poles worked, which corresponds to an increase of 45 thous., as compared with the preceding year.

Employment in different age groups shows a gradual increase. In the group of the elderly (55-64 years), the employment rate was higher in 2016 (47.5%). The occupational activity rate among persons of working age (15-64 years) reached 69% in 2016. The situation of young people is also improving. In the age group of 15-24, the employment rate in 2016 rose to 28.9%.

Taking into account the principle of equality in the labour market, we take measures to provide equal opportunities in the labour market to women and men. The employment rate among women in the recent years has remained stable, revolving around 45%. Similarly to the EU, Poland has observed a higher increase in the employment rate among men.

The tools specified in the Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions, are such as activation benefits aimed at subsidizing employment, for example, of young parents who want to come back to the labour market after a break taken to bring up a child.

Madam Chair,

The Act of 16 November 2016 on **Re-establishing the retirement age at 65 and 60**, amending the Act on Retirement and Other Pensions from the Social Insurance Fund and certain other acts is based on the assumption that the decision on when one's occupational activity should come to an end ought to be made, to a greater extent, by the insured persons themselves. This could enable taking into account individual circumstances. Therefore, an insured person should be able to decide whether to exercise his or her right to retire at the age specified by the amended act or continue his or her professional career, thus postponing the moment of retiring. That choice is largely determined by the individual situation of the insured person as regards his or her health condition, position in the labour market, plans concerning the duration of rest following the end of his or her occupational activity, as well as certain expectations regarding the amount of retirement benefits to be received in the future.

Distinguished Delegates,

The concept of **the Agenda 2030** with its 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) recognizes that each country faces specific challenges in its pursuit of sustainable development. As a result, the Agenda has to take account of different national realities and capacities with respect of national policies and priorities.

Poland undertook concrete steps to **define a new development model**. We strive to effectively use our strengths and at the same time to create new advantages in the areas generating high added value, with more extensive and efficient use of knowledge and capital. A new vision of the development of Poland was institutionalized by the Polish authorities last February, when the Polish Government officially adopted ***the Strategy for Responsible Development***. Based upon wide consultation with diverse state and civic institutions and organizations, the Strategy's concept is aimed at safeguarding Poland's sustainable and versatile development taking into account its economic, social and environmental dimensions.

The main objective of the Strategy is the ***growth of income of the Polish population, accompanied by an increase in social, economic and regional cohesion***, this is to improve the wealth of Poles and internal convergence of the process in its individual dimensions. The Strategy is comprehensive and constitute an **instrument for managing the main development processes** of the country, and **its implementation will support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Poland**.

The goals of the 2030 Agenda refer to all social, professional and age groups, organisations, business, science, local, regional and national authorities. **The key challenge, tackled also by the Strategy for Responsible Development, is to ensure an appropriate role for each stakeholder and to create opportunities to get involved in its implementation in a responsible way.**

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As an active member of the **UN 2030 development Agenda** negotiations, **Poland attaches significant importance to the review of the Agenda's implementation process at global, regional and country levels.** The national voluntary reviews (NVR) procedure – initiated in 2016 - has proven very useful and augurs well for that matter in the years to come. Exchange of positive and negative experience voluntarily presented by both, developing and developed countries should represent good knowledge capital in pursuing the 17 SDGs. An increasing number of countries wishing to present their NVRs at the yearly High Level Political Forum for sustainable development is tangible evidence that the importance of the 2030 Agenda provisions, including these on relationship between population and development, are gaining ground in all countries across the globe and their societies.

Thank you for your attention