



Statement by Amnesty International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, at the 50th session of the UN Commission on Population and Development (3 -7 April 2017)

The demographic data on global population trends show that while many countries experience demographic transition, others face low levels of fertility and ageing populations, which present both challenges and opportunities to development. In formulating effective policies for sustainable development, States must take into account population trends such as the changing population age structures and at the same time take progressive steps to ensure their human rights obligations are met. Only development, which is inclusive, based on human rights, and principles of equality and non-discrimination, can enable societies to benefit from demographic dividend, and empower more individuals to fully enjoy their human rights.

In the light of this, Amnesty International calls on States to consider the following principles with regard to their development policies:

- Gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity, and the full realisation of their human rights, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights, among which is the right to make free choices about their own sexuality and reproductive lives, and access family planning and safe and legal abortion, are key to achieving gender just societies and sustainable development. Governments must eliminate gender-based and intersectional discrimination and all forms of gender-based violence, and transform structural factors that result in unequal access to rights, resources and opportunities for women and girls, and members of marginalised groups.
- Demographic dividend can only be realised if adolescents and young people can fully enjoy their human rights, including their rights to education, housing, work, health, and their sexual and reproductive rights. Adolescents and young people are active agents of social change. They must be empowered to fulfil their potential through, among others, equal access to youth-friendly health services, including sexual and reproductive health services and information, and modern methods of contraception; quality education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and opportunities for decent work and employment.
- Older people's contribution to societies must also be recognised. Policies must ensure that people can enjoy their human rights throughout their life cycles, without age-based discrimination. Particularly, women who comprise the majority of older persons globally and who often face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Older people's long-term care needs must be addressed, including through family-friendly policies, which do not disproportionately shift the burden of unpaid care work to women and girls.
- Policies must prioritise the needs of groups at risk of discrimination and marginalisation, and ensure their members can equally participate in development. These include, among others, people with disabilities, people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, Indigenous people, minorities, migrants and refugees. To this end, States must build up their national capacities to collect and disaggregate data by gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, geographical location, income, and other relevant characteristics.
- And last but not least, only development that is participatory and accountable can be truly sustainable. Governments must ensure that development policies are formulated and reviewed with the active and meaningful participation of civil society and people who are affected by them. Effective mechanisms must be put in place to hold governments to account for their implementation.