

PERMANENT MISSION OF TUNISIA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
31 BEEKMAN PLACE  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022



البعثة الدائمة للجمهورية التونسية  
لدى منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
بنيويورك

**Statement of**  
**Mr. Ramzi Louati,**  
**Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of**  
**Tunisia to the United Nations**  
**General Debate of**  
**the 51<sup>st</sup> Session of the Commission on**  
**Population and Development**  
**(New York, 11 April 2018)**

**Mr. Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

At the outset, I would like to express to the Chair of the 51st session of the Commission on Population and Development and the members of the bureau our full appreciation for the efforts made to organize this session of the CPD.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Tunisia underscores the importance of the theme of this session, namely "Sustainable Cities, Human Mobility and International Migration".

On this occasion, Tunisia reaffirms its commitment to implement the Program of Action for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, and the New Urban Agenda.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Compared to the size of its population, Tunisia has a large community of migrants abroad. The number of Tunisians living abroad has exceeded 1 million, 83% of whom live in Europe. Through its consular and diplomatic network and the Office of Tunisians Abroad, Tunisia ensures the protection of the rights and interests of Tunisians in the host countries and works to facilitate their positive integration, as well as to strengthen the participation of Tunisians abroad in the national development process.

Tunisia underlines the positive contribution made by migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development and calls for facilitating orderly, safe and regular migration and mobility of people.

Tunisia calls to ensure full respect and protection for all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all refugees and migrants, as well as their safety and dignity, regardless of their status and without any discrimination.

On the other hand, Tunisia recalls that forced displacement and irregular migration in large movements present security, economic and social challenges to transit and hosting countries. In this regard, we call for an enhanced cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination to deal with these multiple challenges.

In order to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, Tunisia stresses the need to provide countries of origin with the required economic support to fight poverty and unemployment, to help building peaceful and inclusive societies and to provide capacity building to all the countries involved to help them better manage and control their borders.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Tunisia reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014.

In this context, my country wishes to reaffirm that sustainable development cannot be built without gender equality, emancipating women and ensuring their well-being.

Combating early and forced marriage and facilitating access to contraceptive health care is a necessity to enable women to complete their studies and participate in working life while avoiding unwanted pregnancies.

In the same context, prevention is better than cure. Educating adolescents and young people about their sexuality, and especially about sexually transmitted diseases, would help protect them.

The lack of sexuality education risks undermining the ability of youth to become a positive social actor in present and future times. Comprehensive sexuality education is necessary for the psychological balance of young people and their good social integration.

It is for this reason that Tunisia has resolutely embarked on the path of comprehensive sexual education.

Family planning is an imperative to ensure the well-being of women, children, young people and the whole of society.

In this regard, I would like to stress that Tunisia's commitment to sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights and women's rights and gender equality dates back to the first years of independence.

In fact, the family planning program was launched in 1966.

Abortion has been legalized since 1973.

The state is making every effort to reduce the maternal and infant mortality rate.

In this context, Tunisia wishes to acknowledge its fruitful cooperation with the various UN agencies and funds, including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which, since 1974, is supporting national projects on family planning and sexual and reproductive health. Through technical assistance and fundraising, UNFPA is helping to improve the quality of life of people and to achieve the goals of the ICPD and the 2030 Agenda.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Teenagers and young people are an important component of Tunisia's development policy. The government spares no effort to invest in education and health services to ensure the welfare of youth.

This policy has yielded the expected results. The enrollment rate of girls and boys aged 6 years reached 99.4%

In higher education, the percentage of girls is higher than boys. It reached 62.3%.

Similarly, the number of girls graduating from secondary education is double the number of boys.

I also like to point out that the new Tunisian Constitution of January 2014 strongly protects the rights of women, particularly through its article 21, which enshrines the equality of citizens in rights and duties and their equality before the law without discrimination. Article 46 aims to ensure equal opportunities for men and women to access various responsibilities, to achieve parity between women and men in elected assemblies and to eliminate violence against women.

In the same line, Tunisia adopted in July 2017 the Comprehensive Law on Combating Violence against Women, which constitutes a major historic step forward for the legal protection of women against violence.

This law repeals the Criminal Code provision, which allowed a rapist to marry his minor victim in order to escape prosecution. It also penalizes sexual harassment in public places, employment of children as domestic servants, and fines for employers who intentionally discriminate against women in wages.

Similarly at the initiative of the President of the Republic, H.E. Mr. Beji Caied Essebsi, Tunisia abolished in September 2017 the ban on marriage of Tunisian women with non-Muslims.

### **Ladies and gentlemen,**

For the developing world, the line between the demographic catastrophe and the demographic dividend is very fine.

A sexually frustrated and misinformed young man or girl will inevitably fail at all levels and be a further handicap for our developing countries.

A morally and intellectually repressed youth who is unfamiliar with a culture of human rights, modernity and tolerance will probably be the future oppressor of future generations and an easy prey to radicalism and the scourge of terrorism.

Girls deprived of their right to education, unprotected sexually, victims of early marriage, sexual violence and genital mutilation will unfortunately not be psychologically balanced mothers and will transmit their pain to live to their children.

It is for this reason that we emphasize the need to integrate comprehensive sexuality education into educational programs to prevent youth and adolescents from risky behaviors and sexually transmitted diseases while recognizing the dignity of the human body.

For us one point of salvation: modern education based on critical thinking, human rights, comprehensive sexuality education, acceptance of diversity and tolerance.

Without respect for these principles, any system of social development will be doomed to failure and will not be sustainable.

It is in the light of these principles that Tunisia has decided to move forward and create its own path, a path on which we advance in strong partnership between government and civil society.

We are proud of our active civil society. The Tunisian government commends the engagement of women, men, youth and all members of Tunisian civil society to contribute to the social and human progress of the country.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Tunisia is firmly pursuing its democratic transition based on the principles of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and citizen participation. Our country is also facing a number of development challenges, particularly in the fight against poverty and unemployment and regional development.

We are aware that much remains to be done to meet the aspirations of Tunisians, but we are confident that our investments in our youth, in our women and in the emancipation of our people will be our guarantee of success.

**Thank you for your attention**