



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza  
Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See

*Fifty-Second Session of the Commission on Population and Development*  
**Agenda Item 3(b): Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

New York, 1-5 April 2019

Mr. Chair,

As we call to mind the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo and consider the follow-up to its Program of Action in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, my Delegation is aware of the many challenges that the international community still faces to achieve the goal of greater, integral human development.

The ICPD was an important milestone in the world's understanding of the interrelationship between population and development, indeed considering the linkage between these two for the first time. All forms of coercion in the implementation of population policies were rejected. The family, based on marriage, was recognized as the fundamental unit of society, and as entitled to comprehensive support and protection. Strong impetus was given to the improvement of the status of women throughout the world, particularly with regard to their health, and their full and equal participation in development. The expanding phenomenon of migration was considered along with its impact on development.

Since then, development has been and remains the proper context for the international community's consideration of population issues. Within such discussions there naturally arise questions relating to the transmission and nurturing of human life. To formulate and position population issues, however, in terms of individual "sexual and reproductive rights" is to change the focus from that which should be the proper concern of governments and international agencies. Suggesting that reproductive health includes a right to abortion explicitly violates the language of the ICPD, defies moral and legal standards within domestic legislations and divides efforts to address the real needs of mothers and children, especially those yet unborn.

Moreover, questions involving the transmission of life and its subsequent nurturing cannot be adequately dealt with except in relation to the good of the family, which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines as "the natural and fundamental group unit of society."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 16.3.

Governments and society ought to promote social policies that have the family as their principal object, assisting it by providing adequate resources and efficient means of support, both for bringing up children and looking after the elderly, to strengthen relations between generations and avoid distancing the elderly from the family unit.

Mr. Chair,

Another landmark of the ICPD was the link between migration and development. Ever since, there has been increased sensitivity, research, cooperation and effective policies in this field, leading to the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Migration is a global phenomenon; one which is linked to development and poverty, as well as to financial and health security. In particular, migrants are now seen as proactive agents of development. Nonetheless, negative stereotypes of migrants are, at times, exploited to promote policies detrimental to their rights and dignity, and migrants, especially children and women, are often victims of trafficking. These are issues that demand our attention when tackling problems concerning population and development.

This topic also has strong environmental implications. While population growth is often blamed for environmental problems, we know that the matter is much more complex. Wasteful patterns of consumption, growing inequalities, the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, the absence of restrictions or safeguards in industries, all endanger the natural environment. Research across several decades shows, with insignificant variations, that inequalities in consumption are stark. Globally, the 20% of the world's highest-income people account for 86% of total consumption, while the poorest 20% a mere 1.3%. Confronted with these and other data that demonstrate drastic inequalities, Pope Francis exhorts us to an "ecological conversion,"<sup>2</sup> which calls for a change to a more modest lifestyle and responsible consumption, and for a greater awareness of the universal destination of the world's resources.

Mr. Chair,

The Holy See is fully aware of the complexity of the issues involved in the review and appraisal of the ICPD Programme of Action. This very complexity requires that we carefully weigh the consequences for present and future generations of the strategies and recommendations to be proposed. Fundamental questions like the transmission of life, the family, and the material and moral development of society, need very serious consideration. The Holy See stands ready to make its contribution toward finding ways to building a world of genuine equality, fraternity and peace.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 216.