



SERBIA

52nd session of the Commission on Population and Development

Check against delivery

STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mrs. Slavica Djukić Dejanović
Minister without Portfolio in charge of Demography and Population Policy

New York, 1 April 2019

Mr. Chairman,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to join you here at the 52nd session of the Commission on Population and Development. This exceptional meeting marks the quarter of a century since the Cairo Conference and the adoption of the Programme of Action, a historic milestone that shifted the focus of the global population policy towards the needs, aspirations and reproductive rights of women and men.

Serbia has aligned itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to use this opportunity to make some additional remarks in the national capacity.

In the past 25 years, much has been done to ensure the respect of human rights and dignity, provide for reproductive health services and facilitate the creation of an environment for family planning choices for all. The Serbian Government remains committed to continuing an active implementation of population and development strategies, especially following the establishment of the Office of Demography and Population Policy in 2016 when Serbia recorded the lowest birth rate in its recent history.

Therefore, the Serbian Government adopted a new birth promotion strategy in 2017 with eight specific targets. The new Law on Financial Support for Families with Children is designed to reduce the economic costs of childbearing, and focuses not only on ensuring the socio-economic support to families but also provides for other activities, set forth by the Programme of Action.

There is no development without sexual and reproductive health, so the new document's targets have been aligned with the recently adopted "National Programme for Safeguarding and Improving Sexual and Reproductive Health of the Citizens of the Republic of Serbia."

It addresses all relevant challenges in the area of sexual and reproductive health, including unreliable contraceptive methods, a growing number of unplanned pregnancies and abortions and high-risk sexual activities of adolescents and youth and proposes a set of effective prevention, education and counselling measures in order to raise awareness and promote healthy sexual behaviours and reproductive health rights.

Proceeding from the need for partnership and international collaboration, highlighted by the Programme of Action, we have conducted a research study, with UNFPA's extensive support, to overview and better

understand the issues facing parents and their employers in an attempt to reconcile work and parenthood. Since 2018, the results of this study are being translated into practice through a family-friendly award for companies that provide a supportive environment for parents and their children.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By adopting the Programme of Action, 179 Governments recognized migrations as a key area of population policy. Contrary to the global trends of population growth, Serbia has experienced population decline and depopulation. These complex challenges reflect not only the falling birth rate and higher mortality, but also internal and international migrations as one of the leading causes.

Almost a year ago, we conducted a research study on student migrations and learned that the lack of work opportunities in their line of expertise, low-paid jobs and a low standard of living are the main reason for emigration.

We are aware that there are no simple solutions to this challenge, yet the consequences are many and far-reaching. However, Confucius has taught us that “success depends upon previous preparation and without such preparation, there is sure to be a failure.”

Today’s meeting is all the more important as it is the first review of the ICPD before the first full review of the Agenda 2030 and its ambitious, but much needed Sustainable Development Goals. As Serbia’s Chair of the Inter-ministerial working group for the implementation of the Agenda 2030, let me point out that we continue to be committed to the fulfilment of our global promise and align our population policy with the targets defined by the SDGs. Additionally, I would like to mention that Serbia will present a Voluntary National Review on the SDG implementation at the 2019 High-Level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC.

I hope that this meeting will bring us a step closer to ensuring the needs of the present generations. I also hope that we shall not deny the possibility to future generations to meet their own needs, ensuring in that way that no one is left behind.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.