



52nd Session

Commission on Population and Development

Closing statement by

Dr. Natalia Kanem

Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

10:00 a.m., Friday, 5 April 2019

Conference Room 1, United Nations, New York

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Civil Society friends,
Youth participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Congratulations to all on the successful outcome of this 52nd Commission! On the 25th anniversary of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, a historic Political Declaration serves as a direct, powerful reaffirmation of the ICPD Agenda and its centrality to the 2030 Agenda. It recognizes how far we have come and how far we have left to go. And it delineates what is needed to get there: resources, partnerships, innovation and data.

We know the path forward; therefore, let us use this Declaration to scale up and to push faster.

On behalf of all of us at UNFPA, I thank our distinguished chair, His Excellency Ambassador Courtney Rattray, for his vision, leadership and engagement, which were instrumental to a positive outcome this week.

Let me also thank the other members of the Bureau for their commitment over the past year to making this result a reality. I thank the UN Population Division for their stewardship of the Commission, and I acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of my dedicated UNFPA colleagues to the success of this year's session.

And allow me to thank all of you, distinguished representatives and delegates of the Commission, for your hard work and active participation in the deliberations this week, and indeed over the past year as this process built from national to regional to global.

We should all be heartened by the number, depth and breadth of the national statements delivered during the general debate. Your discussions this week were rooted in the foundational message of the ICPD Programme of Action: that the rights, health and well-being of individuals, and especially women and girls, are at the heart of our collective aspirations.

You pronounced clearly upon:

- The continued centrality of the ICPD Programme of Action, including for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs;
- The critical importance of the empowerment of women and girls, and the elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices;
- The need to achieve universal health coverage that includes access to essential sexual and reproductive health services;
- The potential of harnessing the demographic dividend via expanded access to family planning and investments in young people, and the work that must be done to achieve it;
- The reality and diversity of ageing and low fertility, migration, displacement and urbanization, and the need to take measures to ensure that we deliver for all people amidst these realities;
- And the necessity of timely, disaggregated population data for fashioning policies and programmes that truly leave no one behind.

The five Regional Reviews were a major contributor to this week's success, the result of so much work by so many in and out of the room. I thank the distinguished Chairs of these reviews, who shared with the Commission findings and recommendations that guide regional and national work and help countries and regions learn from each other. We noted with satisfaction the great benefits stemming from these Regional Reviews, and I believe that the Commission would well wish to consider having regional perspectives be a regular and ongoing part of the Commission's future deliberations.

Civil society organizations were integral in developing the vision of the Cairo Programme of Action and seeing it through. They continue to be stalwart partners in advancing the implementation of the ICPD agenda, improving the lives and wellbeing of all people. Their contribution to this session and to the regional reviews has been crucial. We all depend on cooperation with civil society to ensure that we fulfil our sustainable development objectives and reach those furthest behind first.

On behalf of UNFPA and the UN system, let me affirm our commitment to continue to be your partner in the full achievement of the Programme of Action, on which the success of the 2030 agenda depends.

At UNFPA, we have set our sights upon three ambitious aims for 2030:

- Zero unmet need for family planning,
- Zero preventable maternal deaths, and
- Zero violence and harmful practices against women and girls, including an end to child marriage and female genital mutilation.

High-quality population data is the foundational element. It will help us zero in on where the needs are greatest and end the invisibility of those furthest behind. I have every confidence that together, we can get there.

Next year, this Commission will meet to deliberate upon on the special theme "Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development." This is an issue of paramount importance, including for maternal and child health, for gender equality, in humanitarian and fragile circumstances, and for adapting to a changing world.

Let's build on this week's success and the momentum we collectively will generate at the upcoming Nairobi Summit to accelerate the promise of ICPD25. Let us ensure that next year the proceedings of the 53rd Commission will be as focused, productive, substantive and constructive as this year's. Lives depend on it.

Mr. Chair, Distinguished delegates, dear participants,

Consider these words about hope from the poet and Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney, who wrote:

History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave,
But then, once in a lifetime,
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme

Our joint achievements to date demonstrate what's possible. Fifty years after the founding of UNFPA and 25 years after Cairo, we can claim unprecedented successes for the population and development agenda. The more than 40% decrease in maternal mortality over the past 25 years is just one marker of world progress.

Yet the unfinished business of the ICPD Programme of Action remains. Millions upon millions of women and girls are still waiting for world promises to be fulfilled.

It's time for urgent action to fully realize this vital agenda, which is so integral to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Nairobi Summit in November will call upon all of us — the United Nations, governments, civil society, academia, the private sector, young people — to work in concert as partners, committing political and financial support to accelerate the promise of ICPD at the 25-year mark. Thus, we make hope and history rhyme.

I trust that you join me in leaving re-invigorated, with a renewed energy and collective spirit that recognizes the urgency of action now, today.

Thank you once again. I wish all who are traveling safe journeys home.

¡Adelante! Onward to the Nairobi Summit in November!