



Contribution by the 52nd session of the Commission on Population and Development to the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development

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The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) held its 52nd session from 1 to 5 April 2019. The session marked the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994. The special theme of the session was “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”.

This note contains key messages from the Commission’s recent session that are relevant to discussions during the high-level political forum to be held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in July 2019, when Member States will consider the theme, “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, and review progress on Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16, 17. The note may also serve to inform the high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the General Assembly in September 2019.

The messages are drawn from the political declaration adopted by the Commission in April 2019, from reports of the Secretary-General prepared for the annual session and from statements by Member States and invited speakers in the plenary meetings.

(a) Identification of progress, gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges in achieving the SDGs or in relation to the theme within the area under the purview of the CPD

The Economic and Social Council reaffirmed in 2016 that the Commission’s primary mandate is to monitor, review and assess the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. The Council also affirmed that the Commission would contribute to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within its existing mandate (E/RES/2016/25).

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Cairo conference, Member States adopted, for the first time in the Commission's history, a **commemorative political declaration**. In the declaration, Member States *inter alia*:

- Welcomed the progress made thus far towards achieving the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, and stressed that challenges and obstacles remain in the implementation of the Programme of Action and, in this regard, pledged to undertake further action to ensure its full and accelerated implementation;
- Emphasized that the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation are essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Three substantive reports of the Secretary-General: Two reports, one on the special theme of the session and another on the monitoring of population programmes, identified progress and gaps in the implementation of the Programme of Action and assessed its contribution to the achievement of the SDGs. A third report on the flow of financial resources for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action noted shifts in development assistance since 1994.

Progress since 1994:

- Decline in the percentage and number of people living in extreme poverty;
- Increased access to education, family planning and skilled attendance at birth;
- Reduced child and maternal mortality rates, and increased life expectancy;
- Increased realization of reproductive choice, reflected in lower fertility and a later start to childbearing, as well as expanded use of modern methods of contraception;
- Declines in adolescent birth rates, though still high in some regions;
- Reduced rates of harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation, albeit larger numbers of affected persons;
- Improved living conditions for large segments of the urban population in developing countries;
- Advances in some areas on gender equality and women's empowerment (for example, doubling of the number of women members in parliaments, now comprising 24% of parliamentarians worldwide).

Gaps and areas requiring attention:

- Continued high maternal mortality in some regions despite progress;
- Increasing burden of non-communicable diseases in all countries;
- Needed improvements in the quality of education and access to decent jobs to enable the full benefits of the demographic dividend;
- Need for an integrated package of quality sexual and reproductive health-care services, including access to family planning, as part of universal health coverage;
- Need to build on modest gains in women's participation in the labour market, and in narrowing salary differentials for equal work, lifetime earnings, or professional leadership;
- Elimination of violence against women, including from intimate partners;
- Protection of the rights of migrants, including refugees;
- Challenges to social protection and health care systems posed by ageing populations;
- Increased consumption and production, driven in part by population growth, which degrade natural ecosystems and drive climate change, disproportionately affecting disadvantaged and marginalized populations;

- Continuing importance of ODA for the world's poorest countries, yet continuing failure of most donor countries to meet the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of GNI;
- Insufficient resources for the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

A high-level interactive panel on the key findings and recommendations of the regional conferences on population and development brought invaluable perspectives on the challenges faced in different regions and the priorities for countries as they seek to implement the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The panel comprised the chairs or co-chairs of the five regional conferences.

Major priorities for Europe were the promotion of gender parity and work-family balance, eliminating wage gaps between women and men, addressing the brain drain, especially of youth, and strengthening data and statistical capacity.

In Africa, reducing inequalities, improving the status of women and girls, enhancing their sexual and reproductive health, expanding access to family planning and ending harmful practices, including early or forced marriages, remain some of the most pressing challenges. Investing in youth and creating job opportunities are critical to benefit fully from the demographic dividend.

For the Asia-Pacific region, there was an emphasis on human rights, including reproductive rights and the rights of women and girls more broadly. Disaggregated data are needed for monitoring and achieving progress, and regional reviews can support the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action by showcasing best practices.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, continuing challenges include income inequality, elevated adolescent fertility, and sexual and gender-based violence. Participation of all stakeholders, including civil society, is important to implement effective national policies. Another priority is ensuring the availability of data disaggregated by sex, age, migration status and disability.

For the Arab region as well, there is a high priority on data at both the national and sub-national levels. High youth unemployment makes it difficult to capitalize on the demographic dividend, and protracted conflicts have resulted in reversals of development gains, exacerbated inequalities and increased the risks of poverty and ill health.

(b) Successful experiences and lessons learned for empowering people and ensuring inclusion and equality

The report of the Secretary-General on population programmes (E/CN.9/2019/3) highlighted examples of effective strategies for implementing the Programme of Action to ensure inclusion and equality.

Experience with population programmes has shown that women's empowerment can be achieved through grassroots movements, through school-based programmes covering gender stereotypes, roles and inequality, through reforms of legislative, judicial and policy systems to enforce accountability, and through promotion of greater acceptance of women leaders and encouragement of higher aspirations for girls. Improvements in gender balance for unpaid work, including household labour and caregiving, are needed in both developed and developing countries.

Investments in formal education and in lifelong learning opportunities, as well as major improvements in quality standards are needed to reap the full benefits of the demographic

dividend. Cash transfer systems, access to credit for the poor, low-cost private schools and school food programmes have proven effective. Subsidized employment programmes coupled with training and education across the life-course for men and women are needed as well.

Sexual and reproductive health can be improved through offering a variety of modern methods of contraception and providing quality care. Health care for youth that is integrated within non-health programmes is more successful than stand-alone health services. Prevention of reproductive cancers is widespread in high-income countries and should be rolled out globally.

Programmes in support of migrants and migration include provision of documentation and access to services, language-friendly and safe spaces within transit locations, and basic health care for all migrants.

(c) Emerging issues likely to affect inclusion and equality at various levels

Socio-economic inequalities are often reflected in, and sometimes compounded by, inequalities in child and maternal mortality, life expectancy, fertility levels and access to modern contraceptive methods.

The reports of the Secretary-General show that there are large demographic and socioeconomic disparities across countries and world regions, and between geographic areas within countries. While urban areas promote economic activity owing to the density of workers and availability of goods and services, they also include pockets of poverty. At the same time, rural areas are witnessing a decline in jobs and an exodus of workers. Sustained violence and political instability in some countries and regions undermine social and economic development and often lead to large movements of refugees and migrants.

The shift from rural to urban living brings many advantages for sustainable development but must be managed well to avoid social, economic and environmental problems resulting from unplanned urban growth. Poor and vulnerable populations, who tend to settle in areas prone to natural disasters or other environmental hazards, will be the most affected.

(d) An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global, regional and national levels

The ICPD Programme of Action called on governments to strengthen their capacity to produce reliable statistics on a broad range of population, environment and development indicators in a timely manner, adequately disaggregated to focus resources on those who need them most. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in the spirit of reducing inequalities and guided by the pledge that no one will be left behind, called for the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts. Population censuses, household surveys and administrative systems are essential sources of data for deriving SDG indicators, even though they do not always provide data with the frequency and level of granularity required for the detailed monitoring of progress. Consequently,

- Improving the reliability, timeliness and accessibility of demographic data should remain a central focus of efforts to strengthen national statistical systems for monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

- National data systems should be strengthened to provide data disaggregated by key demographic characteristics, especially age, sex, race, ethnicity and migration status, in line with the 2030 Agenda. Whenever possible, data should be collected and disseminated according to single years of age, allowing users to regroup the data into relevant age ranges for SDG indicators, including those pertaining to educational enrolments, adolescent birth rates, working-age populations and older persons.
- Efforts to geo-code population data, including data relevant to SDG indicators, should be enhanced, including for data gathered through censuses, household surveys, population registers and other sources, including big data. Microdata, especially when geo-referenced, must be duly anonymized to maintain confidentiality and safeguard individual privacy.
- To facilitate comparability, data producers should apply standardized statistical concepts and measures. Data disaggregated by migration status can facilitate the monitoring of migrants' access to work and basic services and their integration into host societies.

(e) Areas where political guidance by the high-level political forum is required

- Guidance on all relevant ways to ensure that the contributions of the ICPD Programme of Action to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as detailed in other sections of this note, are fully considered and integrated in reviews of progress by the high-level political forum.
- Advice on additional ways in which demographic data and evidence about interlinkages between population and development may support thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, beyond those suggested in this note.

(f) Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in empowering people, ensuring inclusion and equality, and achieving the SDGs

In the political declaration adopted recently, the Commission on Population and Development called for an accelerated implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and recognized its contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the Commission:

- Emphasized that the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation are essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Recognized that the Programme of Action requires for its implementation adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels, as well as new and additional resources for developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources, and that Governments are not expected to meet the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action single-handedly;
- Encouraged Governments, international organizations, including those of the United Nations system, international financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders to assist developing countries in implementing the Programme of Action through technical assistance and capacity-building activities to accelerate the implementation of the Programme of Action;
- Emphasized that the availability of, and access to, high-quality disaggregated data is essential for measuring progress toward and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Called upon the United Nations system, international and regional organizations and all sectors of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to fully commit themselves and to intensify their contributions to the full, effective and accelerated

implementation of the Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The reports of the Secretary-General prepared for the 52nd session offer a number of **recommendations** to accelerate the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda:

- Governments should plan for the opportunities and challenges associated with trends in fertility, mortality and migration, which will affect the size and age structure of future populations in ways that may boost or hinder the achievement of inclusive sustainable development;
- Improving health-care services and providing cost-effective interventions that address the needs of women and newborns across the continuum of care provided around the time of birth;
- Governments should support the realization of reproductive desires by all couples, including those with fewer children than desired, through universal access to sexual and reproductive health care, and by ensuring access to parental leave, child benefits, tax credits and childcare, emphasizing measures to help parents balance work and family obligations;
- Governments, with support from the international community, are encouraged to deliver an integrated package of essential sexual and reproductive health-care services, to facilitate progress toward the SDG target of universal health coverage, including a wide choice of contraceptive methods and age-appropriate health services for young people;
- Governments are encouraged to increase support for locally-driven interventions that promote the collective abandonment of harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and forced or child marriage, and ensure accountability to legislation;
- While improved access to education has significantly advanced the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action, further improvements in completion rates and in the quality of education are needed to attain the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, including the expansion of modern workplace training, online training and opportunities for adults of all ages to acquire or upgrade their job skills;
- Governments are encouraged to ensure that education systems include curriculum inputs that advance gender equality and reduce gender-based violence by addressing gender stereotypes, promoting non-discrimination and teaching non-violent means of managing conflicts;
- Because reduced fertility is associated with increased spending per child on health and education, policies to expand access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including family planning, and policies to improve education quality and coverage reinforce each other, amplify the demographic dividend and support a virtuous cycle of development;
- Governments are encouraged to advance the political participation and leadership of women and to achieve gender equality in all social and economic indicators, including wages, security of employment, lifetime earnings and pension coverage;
- Governments are called upon to uphold human rights and advance policies that reduce inequalities in opportunities and outcome, promote the social interaction of diverse communities, promote greater social cohesion and reduce xenophobia and discrimination;
- In the context of implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Governments are encouraged to provide safe havens for those living in conditions of persistent violence and poverty, increase the opportunities for people to thrive at home and assure the human rights of migrants and displaced persons, promote their access to documentation, health and education, protect them from violence and support their recovery from all forms of trauma;

- Governments are encouraged to urgently address global emissions and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and to promote all measures to reduce the pace of climate change.

Summary of main messages:

- 1. Reaffirmation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its contribution to implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;**
- 2. Emerging demographic mega-trends need to be taken into account in policies and programmes to achieve sustainable development;**
- 3. Inclusion and equality come from being counted, namely from the production, analysis and use of high-quality demographic data disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, and other relevant characteristics, and having policies and programmes in place to ensure that no one is left behind;**
- 4. Universal access to quality education and health care, including for sexual and reproductive health, amplifies the benefits of the demographic dividend, supports a virtuous cycle of development and is integral to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda;**
- 5. International migration, when well-managed, contributes to sustainable development in countries of origin and destination and helps migrants and their families to improve their standard of living;**
- 6. Gender equality and women's empowerment are central to the linkages between population and development and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.**
- 7. Additional financial resources are needed to accelerate implementation of the Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda, including through ODA, with a focus on the least developed countries.**