

Key messages of Ireland/Denmark/Norway on ‘Health and Population Dynamics’

Health

- Health is an important end in itself and is a basic prerequisite for sustainable development and eradication of poverty. Investing in health is cost effective and stimulates development.
- **Rights:** Our approach must be *rights based* and driven by results. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is a fundamental right for every human being. We must give special attention to those in most need and tackle the underlying determinants of ill health.
- **Gender:** Gender equality and women’s empowerment is at the heart of maximising health at all stages of life, for everyone. Discrimination and norms often prevent women from accessing health care and most important, denies women their sexual and reproductive rights.
- **Inequality and inequity:** Health is unevenly distributed within and across societies. Safeguarding the right of all citizens to basic health services is a cornerstone of any policy to promote equity and reduce inequalities. Universal Health Coverage would be a key achievement.

- Health features prominently in the MDGs and must also be included in the new set of global sustainable development goals.
- Achieving better health at all stages of life is a goal that is relevant for every country. Interventions from all sectors of society will be required.
- We support the summary conclusions on health in the post 2015 agenda from Botswana: *Maximizing healthy lives* could be considered as an overarching health development goal in the new generation goals.
- In this context, it is also important to consider Universal Health Coverage. We need to strengthen health systems so they can address the national health challenges efficiently.
- We believe there is also merit in considering possible targets that could underpin a health goal which might include, inter alia:
 - One which builds on, and accelerates, the progress made on the current health MDGs (4, 5 and 6): ending preventable maternal and child deaths, including providing universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and fighting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases.
 - One relating to the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

- But we need to look **beyond the health sector** – to social and environmental determinants of health. We must maximize the synergies among sectors to ensure sustainable development.
- Reductions in air, water and chemical pollution can prevent up to one quarter of the overall global burden of disease. What people eat, drink and breathe is key to their health. Better access to water and sanitation and treatment of waste-water (as we discussed in our May meeting) could be important contributions to achieving a goal on maximizing health.
- Indoor pollution from cook stoves is a major cause of lung disease in many countries, in particular for women and children under five. Providing access to clean energy could hence be an important step towards improved health.
- Education is also important. Health education provides children and adolescents with the tools to lead a healthy life.

- Decisions made on water management, energy access, food and nutrition or climate change all affect people’s health. These interlinkages must be reflected in policy making, - and in the new set of goals.

Population dynamics and sustainable development

- Population dynamics are about people. Policies must be people-centred, and based on human rights and gender equality.

- We need rights-based policies to address population issues, including high fertility and rapid population growth.
- We must remain committed to the advancement of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)/Cairo Declaration and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- Population dynamics is a broad issue. We need to look at interlinkages with other topics to be discussed later in this group.