

HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY SESSION

OPENING STATEMENTS

Mr Andrey Vasilyev

Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE

Ambassador, your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues

I welcome you all,

- delegates of the Member States,
- experts of the scientific community and representatives of civil society,
- as well as colleagues from international organizations

to this UNECE regional conference under the symbolic title 'Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century'.

It has been almost 20 years since the International Conference on Population and Development — the ICPD — was held in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994. It was a turning point in the international policy approach to population, firmly placing the needs and rights of the individual at the heart of development policies and programmes and envisioning a world where all people enjoy equal opportunities and freedoms to make choices and pursue their own life aspirations.

Countries participating in the Cairo conference, including 50 UNECE Member States at that time, adopted the Programme of Action which established a firm link between population, development and human rights, health and gender equality, thereby:

- responding to population dynamics within a human rights framework;
- advancing gender equality and empowerment of women;
- promoting sexual and reproductive health, including maternal health;
- increasing access to education, especially for girls;
- addressing issues of urbanization, migration and environment;
- ensuring that everyone experiences the benefit of sustainable economic development; and
- promoting participation of civil society.

The ICPD Programme of Action was agreed for a 20 year time-frame, and we have gathered here today to take stock of the achievements and remaining

challenges, and to discuss priorities and policy recommendations that need to be taken in the light of changing societal concerns, and emerging issues in population dynamics across countries of our broad and very diverse region.

While assessing the progress, we should not forget that the implementation of the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action started during a critical period in the history of the eastern part of the UNECE region, where a profound transition towards more democratic and economically dynamic societies was taking place. In a rather short period of time, these countries experienced significant social changes in value systems and norms, including important changes in their policies and legislation. The western UNECE countries underwent societal changes as well, though perhaps more gradual.

These societal changes had a great effect on population dynamics in the UNECE region and posed new challenges. Fertility declined (in the east) and remained low (in the west), life expectancy increased and population ageing intensified; new forms of families emerged and proliferated; international migration flows increased; and populations became more mixed.

The way we approach population and development has further evolved as well. We assert today that the population dimension is a key element of sustainable development which rests on social, economic and environmental pillars and also considers the impact of development on the opportunities of future generations. It is therefore indispensable to reconcile the needs of all groups within society, young and old, men and women and people with special needs.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe has been working closely with the United Nations Population Fund to evaluate the progress in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action in the UNECE region.

You, the member States and civil society organizations, have participated in the 'ICPD Beyond 2014' Global Survey, taking stock of progress made in the different areas related to the ICPD Programme of Action and identifying the persistent and emerging

issues. I would like to thank you personally for the time and work that has been invested within your organizations in completing the very comprehensive questionnaire of this survey.

The information gathered through the survey provided the basis for the UNECE Regional Report 'ICPD Beyond 2014: The UNECE Region's Perspective'. This report is meant to be an important tool for policymakers and civil society to keep track of the persistent issues and the future priorities with respect to population and development. We all look forward to hearing more about the results from the survey that will be presented later during this plenary session.

A number of other activities were undertaken by UNFPA together with UNECE as part of the 'ICPD Beyond 2014' review process in the UNECE region. They aimed to involve more stakeholders in the process and to broaden the discourse on the ICPD issues. For instance:

- three expert meetings on the same topics as the thematic sessions of this conference were convened in March–April this year. More than 75 experts from different countries and representing various stakeholder groups took part in them. You will hear about the outcomes of these meetings during the respective sessions today and tomorrow;
- also, as part of the 'ICPD Beyond 2014' review, a scientific report was commissioned from the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital in Vienna; the copies of this publication are available today. In it you will find an analysis of the UNECE population trends and prospects, with insights on policy implementation and good practices in the region.

Many of the population and development principles set in the ICPD Programme of Action 20 years ago were incorporated into the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Today, the United Nations agencies are working with governments, civil society and other partners in preparing the post-2015 development agenda. Therefore, with the outcomes of the global 'ICPD Beyond 2014' review in mind, the discussions of the next two days are your opportunity to contribute to shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

I would like to thank the government of Switzerland for co-hosting the conference and for its interest in

and generous support to the 'ICPD Beyond 2014' review process.

Let me wish you two very successful days and productive discussions at this conference.

Ms. Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen
Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA

Excellency Ambassador Urs Schmid, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations in Geneva,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Colleagues and Friends,

It is a great pleasure to address you at this opening session of the UNECE Regional Conference for the ICPD Review: 'Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century'. Europe is in the midst of a situation without parallel in demographic history. It is also in the midst of an economic crisis that leads to questioning economic and social policies. This opportunity to discuss the results of the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its follow-up beyond 2014 for the UNECE region could not have been timelier.

On behalf of UNFPA, I would like to express our deep appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for hosting the conference and for its continuous commitment to the ICPD and its reviews. I would like to thank the governments of this region for the country-level reviews, and in particular for their participation in the global survey which provided a rich basis for a comprehensive and evidence-based discussion. A number of countries, particularly the Netherlands, played an important role in securing the decision for the UNECE region to join the global review of the ICPD and its follow-up beyond 2014. We are grateful to them. We are also grateful to our main partner in this endeavour, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), for close collaboration in the review process. Last but not least, I want to acknowledge the contribution of civil society and youth in the review process. Their dedication, as well as technical and programmatic contribution, was valuable.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The ICPD vision, its goals and objectives are even more relevant today, in every region of the world. The relevance of ICPD has become more evident as we engage at the United Nations on ways to extend and better protect the rights of all; ensuring equity, gender equality, non-discrimination; combating gender-based violence, and ensuring sustainable development, among others.

In Cairo, 179 countries elevated the development discourse to an entirely new level, linking empowerment, equity, rights, and focus on quality of life on the one hand, to the achievement of sustained economic growth and sustainable development on the other hand. Nineteen years later, the goals and objectives of Cairo have not been realized. At least not everywhere; and not for everyone.

In this region there is a lot to celebrate. Countries have adopted policies to address ICPD-related issues: policies to promote rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, to facilitate family and work balance, to increase access to and quality of sexual and reproductive health services — including for adolescents and young people, to promote healthy and productive ageing, to enhance the impact of migration, to name a few.

Some of the results of these changes are visible and present in the lives of people in this region. People generally live longer and healthier lives. They have more reproductive choices, as well as better knowledge and means to fulfil these choices. People can move more freely between countries. New forms of families have emerged. Adolescent fertility, abortion and maternal mortality have declined. Gender gaps have been narrowed in many areas. Gender-based violence — a taboo in many countries — is being openly discussed and addressed by governments and civil society. More intergenerational solidarity is observed. The population issues are better integrated in policies and programmes, and in many countries are addressed in the context of human rights rather than numbers.

It is an overall positive picture, but this is only part of the reality. Exercising rights and choice is still not a reality for all, two decades after Cairo. In fact, I am concerned about reports of potential curtailing of rights in the region. Moving forward not backward should be our common goal.

We all appreciate the unprecedented challenge of low fertility, migration and ageing in this region. But often the policies designed to address these issues are not effective because they fail to address fundamental issues of the rights of individuals and couples to make choices, to enjoy gender equality, and to have universal access to quality family planning and reproductive health services, as prerequisites for people to fulfil their reproductive choices. A strong body of evidence is available in some parts of this region proving that comprehensive family-friendly social policies, gender equality and access to reproductive health services contribute to the increase in fertility. Meanwhile the poverty of choices explains why the actual fertility is sometimes lower than it would have been if there were a better balance of family and work for individuals and families. Life expectancy has not increased equally in the region, and male mortality is of concern in parts of the region. The prevalence of HIV in the UNECE region has shown a significant increase, especially in the last two decades and among young people. All youth do not have access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. Absence of comprehensive sexuality education in many countries in the region severely affects life options of young people, rendering them vulnerable to debilitating effects of sexually transmitted infections and HIV. The high economic impact of not maintaining a healthy and productive young population harms development targets of many countries. Youth unemployment is high in the region and above 30 percent in ten countries of the region — the youth of today are called the 'lost generation.' What impact is this having on family formation, on migration, on health — including reproductive health? Negative stereotypes, discrimination, traditional harmful practices still exist. Migration sometimes means brain drain for some parts of the region, drainage of essential human resources and capacities. These are but a few examples. In short, there remain many challenges in the region.

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

At the time of Cairo, the UNECE region was highly diversified in political, socio-economic and demographic terms. In the two following decades, while the region saw profound changes and in many aspects has seen some convergence, it has also seen disparities broadened, between countries or subregions.

We have also observed deepening inequities and inequalities within countries, further exacerbated by the current crisis, and with direct impact on women, on youth, on the elderly and on other disadvantaged populations. Why is this important? We have learned that nations with more equality do better on nearly every measurable health and social indicator, and are more cohesive and inclusive than less equal societies. Addressing inequalities is therefore a high-impact intervention, and this can be done by providing universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, respecting the rights of migrants, empowering women and combating gender-based violence, promoting youth participation as well as intergenerational solidarity, for example.

In addition to giving high priority to reducing inequities and inequalities, one of the crucial conclusions of the review so far is that investment in human capital is a key — an essential — strategy for sustainable and equitable development. It is important that policy approaches include preventive interventions, respect for rights, health and education for all, including comprehensive sexuality and reproductive health education, as well as long-term and multisectoral planning, beyond the usual political cycles. Supporting individuals and families to take care of themselves is sustainable, especially in times of crisis. Supporting women, men and youth to have a healthy sexual and reproductive life is one of the most preventive and sustainable interventions a government can make.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

One of the noteworthy results of the review in this region is the effective partnerships with stakeholders at the national and regional levels, and the involvement of civil society and community organizations in the success of several of the achievements. On the other hand, we learn that youth groups are rarely included as partners of governments, as well as other vulnerable groups. Strengthening civil participation, in particular of vulnerable groups when relevant, in policy dialogue and programme development is key to accelerate future progress.

This region possesses strong institutional and technical capacity, and has greatly contributed to normative work on ICPD matters. It is also a region where most traditional donors are, as well as several emerging donors. This region's technical and

financial support benefit not only the region but also the rest of the world. The policy and programmatic experience of this region can also provide useful insights and lessons learned to other regions. I am convinced that the 'ICPD Beyond 2014' results in this region will contribute significantly to the global process.

As we consider the ICPD issues in the region, we should be conscious of the direct interconnection with the discussions going on worldwide to frame the post-2015 development agenda. It is important to examine the findings of the ICPD review and assess how they can potentially inform priorities for a new development framework that fully integrates population dynamics, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude on a positive note. Research indicates that current demographic trends in the region are not necessarily threats by themselves, and that societies can live securely and prosper with smaller populations. Narrow policies that seek to influence a specific demographic trend in a desirable direction are often not effective. Long-term vision and planning, coherent sets of broad and complementary multisectoral policies combined with investment in human capital — the people — is the most effective strategy for sustainable positive impact. Such policies can and must be designed in broad partnerships between governments, civil society, academia, the private sector, and media. ICPD remains an excellent blueprint to achieve this.

H.E Ambassador Urs Schmid
Switzerland
Chair of the UNECE Regional Conference

Excellencies, Mesdames et Messieurs,

Au nom de la Suisse, j'ai le plaisir de vous souhaiter la bienvenue à Genève, pour assister à cette conférence importante. Permettez-moi de vous remercier pour la confiance que vous m'accordez ainsi qu'au vice-président pour vous guider durant les deux prochains jours. Soyez assurés que nous allons faire de notre mieux pour que cette conférence soit intéressante et enrichissante,

afin que nous puissions tous ensemble contribuer à définir le futur du Programme d'Action de la Conférence Internationale sur la Population et le Développement (CIPD).

Comme vous le savez, il y a presque vingt ans au Caire, le Programme d'action de la CIPD a été approuvé à l'unanimité par 179 États membres de l'ONU. Celui-ci fut un jalon de référence très important dans le domaine de la population et du développement, plaçant les droits de la personne ainsi que les choix des hommes et femmes au centre de l'attention.

Jusqu'à ce jour, l'agenda CIPD reste hautement pertinent. Bien que des résultats importants puissent être observés, tous les objectifs n'ont pas été atteints et nous voyons également de nouveaux défis émerger. Cependant, une multitude de stratégies innovatrices ainsi que des nouvelles possibilités ont été développés qui peuvent accélérer la mise en œuvre du Programme d'action — je pense par exemple aux nouvelles technologies d'information et de communication.

Aujourd'hui, il est temps de regarder derrière nous afin de mieux pouvoir faire face à l'avenir. Il est temps de réfléchir sur les résultats atteints et analyser les stratégies qui ont conduit aux réussites liées à l'agenda CIPD. Il est également temps d'identifier les champs du Programme d'action qui demandent une attention continue, et d'examiner soigneusement les facteurs qui ont pu empêcher la réalisation de certains objectifs. Enfin, une telle analyse devrait nous guider pour définir les futures priorités. Nous sommes réunis ici précisément pour cela, nous focalisant sur la région couverte par la Commission Economique des Nations Unies pour l'Europe (CEE-ONU). Nous nous rencontrons pour échanger nos expériences, pour apprendre les uns des autres et pour conjointement définir les prochaines étapes, afin qu'à l'avenir, la santé sexuelle et reproductive, les droits reproductives, ainsi que l'égalité des genres et la non-discrimination deviennent une réalité pour chaque femme et chaque homme, pour chaque garçon et chaque fille.

The 'ICPD Beyond 2014' review is timely as we are in the middle of the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) discussions. It provides an excellent opportunity to share the rich experiences since the Cairo conference, to highlight future priorities and

to contribute to shaping the regional and global development agenda.

My government reaffirms its commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action and underlines the importance of this 'ICPD Beyond 2014' review by sponsoring this regional conference and contributing financially to the global review process. Switzerland is counting on you to make it a success.

Allow me now, as your Chairman, to provide you with further information on the coming two days:

- As you have seen on the programme, the conference is organized in three thematic sessions. Today the discussions will focus on Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development, while tomorrow on Families, Sexual and Reproductive Health over the Life Course and Inequalities, Social Inclusion and Rights. Three designated moderators will chair these thematic sessions.

- For all three thematic sessions, the Rapporteur will be Prof. John Hobcraft of York University of the United Kingdom. Prof. Hobcraft will make concluding remarks after each thematic session. The highlights of his reports on each discussion will be reflected in the Chair's summary.

- I would also like to draw your attention to the important panel discussion on partnership and international cooperation that will take place during the lunch break tomorrow. The panel will be moderated by the well-known journalist and UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador Catarina Furtado.

- Let me also inform you that the report on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in the UNECE region will be launched during this high-level plenary session. This will happen after the keynote addresses under agenda item 5. A copy of the Executive Summary of the Report is provided in the conference folders [document ECE/AC.27/2013/3], while the full Report is as of today available on the Conference website.

- I also wish to inform you that I plan to circulate the preliminary first part of the Chair's Summary during the lunch break tomorrow. Participants wishing to provide a feedback are invited to do so directly to the Chair's secretariat in rooms E1002 or E 1008 on this same floor behind Conference Room XVII. I will distribute the full text of the Chair's Summary tomorrow during the coffee break, after the third thematic session.

- As you might have observed, the programme of the conference is dense. We have nevertheless foreseen an opportunity for a more informal get together. It is indeed my pleasure to invite you all to a reception at 6 o'clock this evening. The reception will take place in the Palais des Nations' restaurant on the eighth floor, that means, on the top floor of the historic and iconic building of the United Nations and also former League of Nations with a wonderful view of the lake and the surroundings. For instructions on how to get there please refer to the information provided in your folder.

Enfin, permettez-moi d'exprimer mes remerciements à l'Unité pour la population de la CEE-ONU ainsi qu'au Bureau régional du Fonds des Nations Unies pour la Population pour l'Europe orientale et l'Asie centrale. Les deux équipes ont fait un excellent travail de préparation et organisation de cette conférence. Je suis heureux de pouvoir compter sur leur soutien précieux durant ces deux jours.

Je vous souhaite à toutes et tous une conférence intéressante et enrichissante et vous remercie pour votre attention.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

President Tarja HALONEN
Co-Chair of the High-Level Task Force
For the International Conference on
Population and Development (ICPD)
and Former President of Finland

'Sexual and reproductive health and rights as just — and smart — politics'

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We face an important moment at the United Nations. This planet and its inhabitants need a more sustainable future. The international community needs to accomplish a forward-looking agenda for human rights and equality for all. Luckily we have a triple window of opportunity. It is really the right time to act.

In 1994, Member States adopted the Programme of Action at the Cairo conference. The rights and empowerment of women and adolescents, including their reproductive rights and health, were placed at the centre of population and sustainable development. Its implementation has since improved the lives of millions around the world.

Firstly, we are taking stock of progress in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and formulating its follow-up, 'ICPD Beyond 2014', which we are especially here in Geneva for. Secondly, a global post-2015 development agenda is being defined. It will need to include the unfinished business of the MDGs, including reproductive health. Thirdly, Sustainable Development Goals are also being developed and will, in my view, need to be combined with the Post-2015 Agenda.

In preparation for Rio+20, the High-Level Panel for Global Sustainability gave its report to the UN Secretary General. The Panel, which I co-chaired, emphasized that women's empowerment is the right thing to do — and a smart investment.

This triple window can be beneficial economically and socially, as well as just for all individuals.

The ICPD Programme of Action originally envisioned that development will be achieved when all individuals have the information and means to decide on their sexual and reproductive lives free from violence, coercion and discrimination. While we celebrate the successes of the past 20 years, we must take note that too many women, young people and especially marginalized communities are being left out of the Cairo promise.

Today's generations of girls and young women in our region are growing up with more rights and opportunities than the generations of women that preceded them, and with greater power over their own lives. However, serious disparities among and within countries persist, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The ECE is a large area rich in the diversity of cultures. The state of sexual and reproductive health and rights varies too widely. In some communities and countries of the region, the reality is that access to sexual and reproductive health services and commodities is limited, unaffordable or of poor quality. This is also the case with comprehensive sexuality education. We need to guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights. This is a way to 1) lower the rate of teenage pregnancies, 2) lower

the risks of sexually transmitted infections and HIV and 3) meet the need for contraceptives.

Moreover, low-income women and adolescents, and especially marginalized groups, face greater barriers to accessing these services.

Adolescents also face social, cultural and legal barriers to sexuality education, information and related health services. In at least nine countries, there is a legal age restriction to accessing sexual and reproductive health services without parental consent.

Maternal mortality is the lowest in the world on average (18 deaths per 100,000 live births in the ECE countries in 2010), but a closer look at poor and marginalized communities within countries indicates much higher levels than national averages reveal.

The ECE also has the fastest ageing population in the world, with 22 percent aged 60 years and older today and expected to reach 35 percent by 2050. It is positive that people live longer than before. And the fact is that we are only just learning what ageing means.

We know already that we have to guarantee decent and secure social protection and care needs, also sexual and reproductive health care, for the ageing populations. Gender- and family-friendly work environments are important. And we need policies to enable more women to join the workforce. We need to encourage men to take more responsibility at home, too. This approach, alongside improved immigration policies, can help balance the situation and vitalize the workforce. At the same time, it ensures fuller social integration.

The High-Level Task Force for the ICPD welcomes the steps that some ECE countries have also taken towards ensuring equality under the law, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. In 2010, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers made a commitment to undertake measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, acknowledging that many forms of intolerance and discrimination persist in the region — including criminalization, social exclusion and violence. This demonstrates our political will to put an end to the violations of human rights and discrimination that these communities suffer on a daily basis.

The High-Level Task Force for the ICPD urges decision makers in the ECE region to prioritize the protection and fulfillment of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. In our Policy Recommendations paper for the 'ICPD Beyond 2014', we call for four key actions to address the ICPD 'unfinished agenda':

1. Respecting, protecting and fulfilling sexual and reproductive rights for all through public education campaigns and community mobilization on human rights, and enabling policy and legal reforms.

We need to foster understanding of human sexuality as a positive aspect of life. We must create cultures of tolerance, respect and non-discrimination. We must end harmful gender stereotypes and violence against women and girls. Our governments have the primary duty but we must mobilize all sectors of society to create a supportive environment for the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights:

- men and boys;
- educators and health providers;
- policymakers, parliamentarians and law enforcers;
- employers;
- the private sector; and
- journalists.

Laws and policies are needed to guarantee the protection of sexual and reproductive rights. All individuals should be able to exercise them without discrimination on any grounds.

Often people are denied their sexual and reproductive rights because of the fear of some. I suggest we all step up and decide to be brave.

As it is the theme of this conference, I encourage you to work for laws and policies that enable choices and opportunities, health and well-being. Women and girls should not be blocked by attitudes and policies which control their sexuality and childbearing decisions.

With proper legislation, education and information, we can decrease the need for abortion. Abortion is never an easy option. But for some, it is the only option. A minimum standard must be that women and adolescent girls have timely access to quality safe abortion services. Where women lack access to safe, legal services, the poor ones risk their lives undergoing unsafe procedures. These are clearly matters of social justice and equity.

2. Our second key action area is accelerating universal access to quality, comprehensive and integrated sexual and reproductive health information, education and services.

Particular attention must be paid to reaching adolescents, the most impoverished sectors of society, particularly migrants — regardless of their status — refugees, internally displaced persons, and persons of ethnic minorities.

We can accomplish this by:

- ensuring no group is left behind;
- improving geographic distribution and availability, including in rural areas;
- ensuring providers comply with human rights standards and that services are inclusive; and
- making sexual and reproductive health a priority of the health sector, as well as a priority of our development cooperation policies.

3. Thirdly, we call for ensuring universal access to comprehensive sexuality education for all young people, in and out of school.

It is quite logical that the young ones have to be our priority. All young people must have comprehensive sexuality education; it is our obligation as concerned citizens, as parents and as policymakers. It equips our young people with basic knowledge to make informed, responsible decisions about their sexuality and relationships. This way they can navigate into adulthood safely, and in good health. Sexuality education doesn't corrupt our young people; it protects them.

The Task Force encourages the international community to consider adopting an 'updated' definition and understanding of good practice on what comprehensive sexuality education entails. It should not only teach about biology, and how to prevent pregnancy and HIV, but also about human rights, gender equality, the elimination of violence against women and girls, and tolerance and respect for diversity. Such programmes should be linked

to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and pharmacies that respect their rights to privacy and confidentiality.

4. Lastly, but certainly not least, our fourth call to action is eliminating violence against women and girls.

Ladies and gentlemen, all individuals subjected to violence, including sexual assault, must have access to critical emergency services for their safety and health. They also need access to justice. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence calls for the same. All countries should at least define a core package of services, including post-rape care, and this must include the principle that, in all cases of rape and incest, our policies, laws and services ensure access to quality, compassionate and timely safe abortion services.

Even in the wealthier countries of our region, studies show just how scarce and limited are the services available to people subjected to violence, especially by comparison to the magnitude of the problem. In times of financial crisis —when violence against women tends to spike — we must preserve at least the limited services that are available. Otherwise the costs are huge, and this is a serious issue of human rights.

The High-Level Task Force for the ICPD urges countries to build and capitalize on what has already been accomplished through the ICPD Programme of Action. We remind you to bring those commitments to the fore in the new post-2015 development agenda. Sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the empowerment of women and young people, lie at the heart of sustainable development — and they did especially when we all agreed to put people in focus last summer in Rio +20.

Prioritizing and acting upon these commitments is fundamental to achieving social, economic and environmental justice for the world we want for all.

REPORT ON THE ICPD PROGRAMME OF ACTION IMPLEMENTATION IN THE UNECE REGION

Werner Haug, Director
Regional Office for Eastern Europe and
Central Asia, UNFPA

and

Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich
Chief, Population Unit, UNECE

Introduction

The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which was endorsed by 179 countries in Cairo in 1994, redefined population issues primarily from the perspective of people's empowerment and development based on human rights. The focus on population policies at the macro level, defined with demographic targets, shifted towards a new paradigm of enabling people — in particular women and those from vulnerable groups — to make informed choices, pursuing their own life aspirations; and the emphasis on sexual and reproductive health and rights expanded.

The ICPD Programme of Action was envisioned for 20 years. In 2010, as the set time-span neared its close, the General Assembly (GA) of the United Nations initiated a thorough review of the implementation of the Programme of Action and with the adoption of the GA Resolution 65/234 extended the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014 ('ICPD Beyond

2014'). UNFPA was asked to lead the review process in cooperation with other relevant agencies and UN regional commissions. In the UNECE region, this process included an extensive survey conducted by the Secretariat among its Member States in 2012, an academic analysis provided by the Wittgenstein Centre (Vienna), as well as three thematic meetings with civil society, experts, youth representatives and parliamentarians from across the region, organized jointly by the UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia and UNECE.

The UNECE Regional Report, which was provided to all Member States for their review and comments in June 2013 and is launched at this conference, provides an overview of achievements and challenges experienced by UNECE Member States 20 years after the adoption of the Programme of Action. The report is based mainly on country implementation profiles (CIPs) comprising country-level indicators, and on information provided by Member States in response to a global survey.

Trends in the region

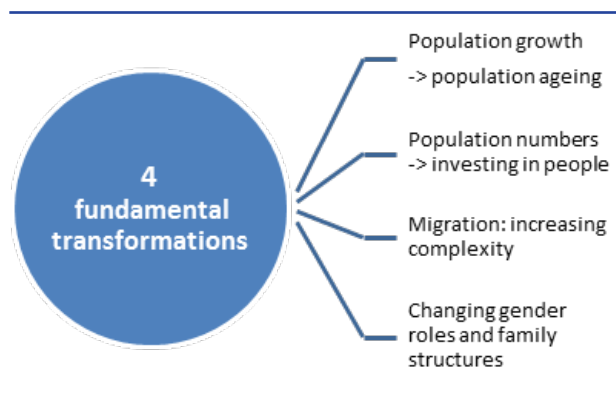
The 56 Member States of UNECE stretch through three continents (Map 1). Amounting to 1.24 billion people in 2010, the UNECE region is home to 18 percent of the world's population, including some of the world's richest economies, as well as those of medium- and low-income countries.

Map 1. UNECE region



Population dynamics and changes in population structure resulting from an interplay of fertility, mortality and migration vary widely across the region. In some areas the west–east divide is quite pronounced. However, despite this diversity, since the early 1990s a number of major population trends shared by most countries in the region could be observed (Figure 1).

Figure 1. General trends



The changes in people's lives and their choices have led to slowing population growth in the region. In a number of countries, mainly in Eastern Europe, populations have even been shrinking. In a few countries, however, there is still significant growth, mostly in Turkey and Central Asia. Declining fertility and increasing life expectancy are inevitably resulting in ageing societies. At the same time, diversity in many parts of the region is increasing as a result of growing and more complex migration flows and societal changes.

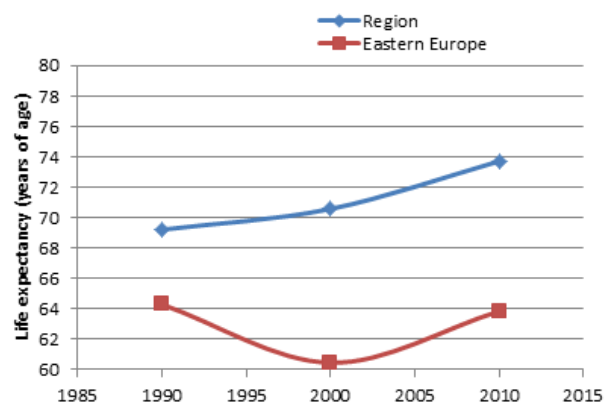
How do our societies respond to these trends?

The expert consultations and research show that there is no cause for alarm. Countries with slow or no population growth can still be very prosperous. The important thing is that they adapt their institutions to the changes and strengthen their investment in people, or what is known as the human capital of a society: the health, education and activity of individuals throughout the life course.

Societies that invest in people are more successful at adapting to ageing and are also more likely to see an increase in birth rates: recent evidence shows that birth rates are picking up in societies that are marked by equality, including gender equality, and high education levels of women.

People in many countries of the region live longer, healthier lives, and have higher levels of education than past generations. They also in general have fewer children, live in more diverse family settings, have higher income and are more mobile.

Figure 2. Life expectancy at birth (men), UNECE



Source: *Population trends and Policy responses in the UNECE Region: Outcomes, Policies and Possibilities* (UNFPA, IIASA, 2013).

Challenges and barriers

Yet, societies and individuals still face many challenges and barriers that prevent them from realizing their full potential. A number of concerns emerged from the review process of the ICPD Programme of Action in the UNECE region.

There are huge differences in the opportunities people have in different parts of the region. Take mortality, for example: in some countries of the eastern part of the region men have a life expectancy that is almost 20 years lower than that of other countries. Such huge gaps are alarming.

Figure 2 illustrates the rise of men's life expectancy throughout the region (orange line) and that of the eastern part of the region (blue line), where the life expectancy of men dropped markedly in the first decade after the collapse of communism. It is now on the rise again. But over the past 20 years, the gap between Eastern Europe and the regional average has almost doubled to 10 years.

In terms of sexual and reproductive health, there has been great progress in reducing maternal mortality in the region, but cervical cancer in particular has emerged as a major, largely preventable cause of death. STI rates remain high in the eastern part of the region and are, together with complications

from abortion, a significant cause for the high levels of infertility among young people. Eastern Europe and Central Asia are also the only world regions where HIV infections are still on the rise.

Significant barriers also remain in terms of access to sexual and reproductive health, including commodities, as well as to sexuality education. Adolescents and young people, poor people and some minorities are affected the most.

As can be seen in Figure 3, the use of modern contraceptives to prevent unintended pregnancies varies significantly in the region and remains on the level of developing countries in South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. In turn, abortion rates still remain relatively high in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, though for the region as a whole they have strongly declined in the last 20 years. In some countries, abortion is also used as the modality for prenatal sex selection in favour of boys.

The challenges and barriers from the perspective of a broader social and economic situation are as follows:

- The transition of young people from education to employment has become a major challenge in the region. Some countries have over 50 percent youth unemployment, particularly in the south and south-east of the region.
- Gender equality and women's participation in political and economic life remain unfinished business in most countries. Gender-based violence,

especially domestic violence, has attracted increasing attention among policymakers but remains a widespread phenomenon across the entire region.

- As a multitude of non-traditional family forms and living arrangements have emerged (for instance, in some countries the majority of children are born out of wedlock), the legal frameworks have to be adapted to prevent discrimination and recognize partners' and parents' roles.

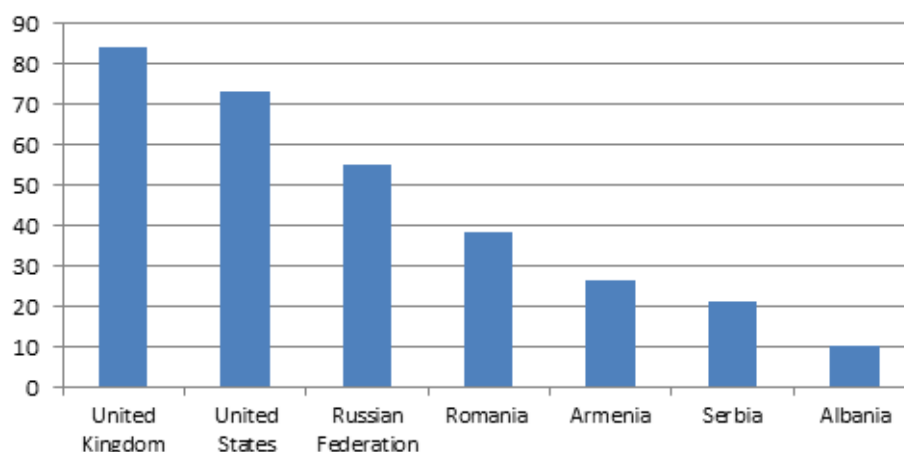
- Economic inequalities are again on the rise. The concern is that the effects of the financial and economic crisis, but also recent policy initiatives in some countries, have increased gaps and threaten to reverse the positive trends that have been seen since Cairo in many areas.

Nevertheless, the lesson from the region is clear: to further implement the ICPD Programme of Action, policies should focus on addressing the challenges and barriers in a forward-looking and holistic way, by firmly addressing inequalities and social exclusion — inside and between countries — and by putting women and young people and their needs and rights at the centre of policy development.

Policy responses: now and beyond 2014

Two decades after the landmark adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action in Cairo in 1994, the UNECE Member States now have a variety of strategies and programmes in place that go beyond traditional population policies to include social and welfare policies.

Figure 3. The rate of use of modern contraceptives to prevent unintended pregnancies, selected UNECE countries (in percent)



Source: *Population trends and Policy responses in the UNECE Region: Outcomes, Policies and Possibilities* (UNFPA, IIASA, 2013).

In many cases, these policies cover vulnerable groups such as youth, elderly people, persons with disabilities, and women, according to the survey on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action conducted among UNECE Member States.¹ The results of the UNECE survey also identify the use of different approaches, facilitators and barriers for Programme of Action implementation, and a number of gaps that require further policy attention.

Policy approaches

Western countries of the UNECE region do not have explicit population policies. Population issues, however, have been part and parcel of broader social and economic policies. For example, policies on poverty encompass different groups such as youth, older persons and other groups. Youth poverty, in turn, is also addressed in a cross-sectional way through a range of policies dealing with poverty, education, employment or family. While generally supportive in realizing people's individual choices, this type of approach has some strengths and weaknesses, such as:

- comprehensive coverage of an issue through a variety of 'cross-sectoral' social and welfare policies;
- an issue might receive less attention when it is not a priority in all specific policy areas; and
- monitoring is more complex and may require special tools.

Countries in the eastern part of the region have had a different experience with population policies. Policies aimed at specific macro-level indicators are common. However, the implementation of such policies is often difficult, as the issues are cross-sectional and care should be taken that such policies do not compromise the rights of individuals and couples.

Overall policy responses

Overall, countries in the UNECE region report a wide variety of policies, programmes and strategies related to the ICPD Programme of Action. Most of these policies were updated or initiated during the last five years. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights have acquired a special

focus. Implementation of the Programme of Action has advanced effectively in the UNECE region with regard to empowering people to make individual choices and to realize their human rights. Yet some challenges remain, while others have emerged anew since 1994. Among the most frequently cited are:

- translating policies into actions supported by budget allocations;
- reaching out to individuals and marginalized groups; and
- monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation.

Facilitators and barriers

Whenever countries reported progress, or the lack thereof, in the questionnaire, they were asked to comment on the facilitators that had made progress possible or the barriers that had delayed or impeded the implementation of policies, programmes or actions. Table 1 summarizes the responses across all sections of the questionnaire and across all country questionnaires.

Policy responses and challenges in respect of four general transformations

From population growth to population ageing

UNECE countries reported in total 145 policies, programmes and/or strategies that deal with population ageing. Among the priorities — over the last 20 years but also in the future — countries identified the following areas:

- provision and quality of social services including long-term care;
- pension reforms;
- dignity and independent living;
- adapted health care services;
- participation in community life and decision-making processes; and
- lifelong learning.

The responses to the questionnaire also indicated important issues of concern:

- neglect, abuse and violence against older persons;
- lacking employment opportunities and (under)utilization of older people's skills and competencies; and
- healthy and active ageing, including sexual and reproductive health.

¹ Responses to the Global Survey questionnaire are available for 45 UNECE Member States. UNECE thanks all governmental and non-governmental organizations and persons who contributed to completing their country's questionnaire.

Table1. Most frequently cited facilitators and barriers in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action in the UNECE region

FACILITATORS	BARRIERS
Effective partnership with stakeholders at the national level	The consequences of the financial and economic crisis
Involvement of civil society and community-based organizations	National budget constraints
Support provided by the government to different organizations (e.g. funding, logistics, coordinating mechanisms)	Existing economic/political environment
Public-private partnership	Complexity of legislation and bureaucracy

From population numbers to investing in people

Moving from the demographic ‘security’ strategies and population-related macro-policies towards investing in people as individuals and in human capital in general is one of the most demanding transformations that the UNECE region is gradually undergoing. In times of globalization potential choices for one’s own life increase significantly. Young adults need support for a better orientation in life and making informed choices related to starting a family, work, education, migration, qualifications and housing. Poverty and unemployment restrict the choices and leave an imprint on the subsequent life of young adults.

With the focus on youth, the following priorities and issues of concern could be identified from the responses to the survey:

Priorities:

- Investing in education (formal and informal):
 - Environmental, civic, sexual and reproductive health, life skills
- Creating employment opportunities
- Improving health:
 - Access to quality health care
 - Youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services
- Combating violence and exploitation.

Issues of concern:

- Reaching out to underserved, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and youth
- Matching labour market needs with education, vocational and lifelong learning

- Participation in decision-making
- Poverty and rising inequality.

Changing gender roles and family structures

Regarding family policies, the responses to the survey in the UNECE region show that:

- Three pillars of family policies — financial benefits, parental leave and childcare — are being continuously updated. Yet they fail to adequately address major family problems related to the conflict between work and family life. The supply of public and private child-care facilities does not meet the demand in many countries. Thus families’ choices remain restricted.

- Special attention is paid to other families in need: families with a member with a disability, parents with three or more children, single parents with children, family members living with HIV.

- Non-traditional living arrangements have emerged and spread (cohabiting couples with children; same-sex couples); however, the legal basis on which they could equally co-exist with traditional family forms is lacking in many countries.

- Increased attention is necessary to rights related to fatherhood. ‘Responsible fatherhood’ is on the rise.

- Gender equality within the family is seen as an important element, while the feminization of care work within the family remains a particular issue of concern.

Gender equality is a priority for many Member States. Legal frameworks have been improved; implementation mechanisms, however, need to be

enhanced. The lists of priority areas and issues of concern include the following:

- Ending gender-based violence, preventing trafficking and increasing women's participation in the informal economy are given high importance.

- Addressing gender stereotypes, ending harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child and forced marriages remain priorities for the future. Sex-selective abortion is also an issue of concern in some countries.

- Reducing socio-economic gender inequalities, bridging the pay gap and a resulting gender gap in old-age pensions, and increasing the social and economic participation of women are among the priority directions for the future. Adequate budgeting and gender-sensitive monitoring of policies and programmes are required.

Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Over the last 20 years there has been noticeable progress in the area of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in the UNECE region in terms of both policy and its level of implementation. Policies support the autonomy of the individual over their personal reproductive choices. The scope of services has widened, information and counselling improved, and coverage of the population expanded. Integrated sexual and reproductive health in primary health care has become more common.

Safe abortion is generally accessible; in a few countries it is only legal for rigorously defined medical reasons. Pre- and post-abortion counselling is still an issue. Access to STI/HIV prevention, treatment and care for vulnerable populations has been enhanced, and voluntary and confidential HIV testing has been expanded.

However, serious challenges and concerns remain. Among the most frequently cited are:

- access to sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, marginalized groups, older persons;
- access of adolescents and youth to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education and services (youth-friendly services);

- quality of sexual and reproductive health services;
- prevention and treatment of infertility (and assisted reproduction technology);
- the rising incidence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs);
 - capacity to respond to the needs of people living with HIV; and
 - operative breast and cervical cancer screening programmes.

Concluding remarks

In line with the ICPD Programme of Action and with the declarations adopted at the Rio Conference on Sustainable Development and the Rio+20 process, UNECE countries have strengthened their approach to population from the perspective of sustainable development, thus pursuing a more integrated approach, taking into account different determinants of development.

However, many issues persist. This may be due to inefficient policies or to progress in society, which usually raises challenges towards satisfying people's needs. These issues are dynamic by nature, and will continue to change in the future. Therefore:

- priorities and policy recommendations foreseen in the ICPD Programme of Action might need to be updated in light of changing societal concerns and emerging issues in population dynamics across countries;
- the lasting impact of the recent economic and financial crisis on the social and economic environment has to be taken into account;
- policies should help people by alleviating barriers that prevent them from making their own personal choices in life;
- achievements in contemporary governance need to be furthered through the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizens' participation in civic matters;
- design of the scope and application of policy requires sound evidence that should be provided by relevant data and rigorous research; and
- many of the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action (related to sustainable environment, economic development, migration etc.) can only be achieved with strong regional coordination and agreement about the way forward.

BRIEF INFORMATION ON THE ICPD BEYOND 2014 GLOBAL SURVEY: OVERALL RESULTS

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The General Assembly Resolution 65/234 on the follow-up to the 'ICPD Beyond 2014' mandates UNFPA, in cooperation with relevant organizations, institutions and experts, to undertake an operational review of the implementation of the Programme of Action. Based on the results of the review, two reports will be prepared: (i) a long global report capturing data from national, regional and other sources for the 47th session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in 2014, and (ii) a shorter report by the Secretary-General, derived from the global report, for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) of the same year. The objectives of the Global Survey are to:

- assess the implementation status of the commitments made in Cairo in 1994;
- identify barriers and success factors in implementation, priorities and new issues; and
- stimulate multi-stakeholder/sectoral dialogue at country level.

The survey tools include a questionnaire with 8 sections on 11 major topics, and country implementation profiles (CIPs) which supply up-to-date statistical information on relevant population issues.² The response rate to the Global Survey by Member State governments across the world is high: 176 out of 194 questionnaires became available (in Europe 34 out of 43). Important observations have been made in the areas of eradicating poverty, gender equality, the situation of young people and older persons, child marriage, fighting discrimination, sexual and reproductive health, abortion, HIV and cancer screening, urbanization and internal migration, international migration, and consumption patterns.

²The questionnaire and the CIPs for the UNECE region are available at http://www.unece.org/pau/icpd_beyond_2014.html.

Two examples illustrate the information received and its relevance to policies:

Governments addressing equality in work and family life:

- 85 percent commitments or laws against workplace discrimination of women
- 64 percent policy commitments to work/family balance
- 90 percent maternity leave
- 54 percent paternity leave
- 41 percent breastfeeding in the public workplace
- 18.7 percent all five policies and provisions (26 out of 113).

Governments committed to the participation of key population groups in decision-making:

- 76 percent adolescents and youth
- 73 percent women
- 61 percent persons with disabilities
- 47 percent older persons
- 21.7 percent all four key population groups (30/138).