

UNECE Regional Conference on ICPD+25
“Enabling Choices: Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development”

Closing remarks by Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary, UNECE

Closing plenary session: 2 October, 16:30-17:30, Salle XVIII

Minister Kostevich, Ambassador McCarney

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

colleagues and friends,

We have convened in Geneva this week to share progress made in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action in our region. But also to speak about the wider policy concerns that we face in ensuring that every child, adolescent, working-age adult and older person in this region can fulfill their potential. We want everyone to live and grow old in a safe and sustainable environment - one that provides equal opportunities; protects, safeguards and promotes human rights; and enables choices for current and future generations.

I am very happy to see such a large number of participants. This is testimony to your continued commitment to implementing the ICPD Programme of Action.

We need this commitment, so that societies in our region are well prepared to adapt to the challenges of demographic change, such as population decline and population ageing. Policy responses need to be designed in a way that embraces the diversity of individual needs and aspirations over the course of life. We must leave no one behind.

[holistic policy approach]

To achieve this, and you are all very well aware of this, **a holistic approach is needed**. An approach that embraces education, employment, participation, health, family life, social and environmental protection and migration - to name but a few of the fields that the ICPD Programme of Action explicitly addresses. We need to embrace an approach that is sensitive to the interlinkages between them. We need to foster positive spill-over effects: if we promote gender equality, we support families. If we invest in individual capabilities, health and well-being; and promote equal opportunities and social inclusion, we nurture economic development and sustainable welfare systems. If we foster a healthy social and natural environment, we build confidence in a future that is worth aspiring to.

[partnerships and collaboration]

Almost 25 years ago in Cairo, and more recently with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we set an ambitious agenda for ourselves. To achieve our goals, **we need to work together, across sectors and countries**. We must learn from each other. Conferences such as this one give us the opportunity to exchange of policy experience. But that is only one step in the in the right direction.

[research and data]

Another point I wish to stress is the **importance of reliable data and research**. To make good decisions, we need to better understand the population dynamics that are transforming societies, as well as the social protection gaps and persistent inequities that still must be addressed. We have uncovered significant data gaps in many areas. Limited disaggregated data for marginalized groups also remains a prominent challenge.

[UNECE support]

UNECE works with member States to address this. We will continue to you in developing reliable national statistics in priority areas for the ICPD, such as social and demographic statistics on migration, poverty, paid and unpaid work, gender, diverse family forms and ageing.

We are very pleased about the ongoing collaboration with our partners running the Generation and Gender Programme. The Generation and Gender Surveys, now providing comparable data in over 20 countries, provide a valuable data source on core questions relating to family formation, fertility decisions, gender equality and others. The Active Ageing Index, developed jointly with the European Commission and Southampton University, is another

tool that fosters better understanding of the situation of older persons in the region, and their “untapped” potential for societies.

[ICPD and SDGs]

Better data to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will also enhance monitoring progress in the ICPD Programme of Action in the region. Over half of the indicators included in the regional ICPD Monitoring Framework are SDG indicators. Our efforts to monitor progress in achieving the ICPD Programme of Action going forward will equally contribute to monitoring progress in achieving the SDGs in the UNECE region.

[going forward]

The Rapporteur’s summary of your discussions here and the Regional Report will inform the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE region on 21-22 March 2019. There, discussions will focus on “*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*”. I hope that many of you will participate. Also in 2019, UNECE will review progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality – Beijing+25.

[Thanks and closing]

As we are nearing the end of the conference, allow me to express my gratitude to all the governments and representatives of civil society and academia for their contributions.

I also thank our colleagues at UNFPA for the excellent continued collaboration in the follow-up and review of progress at the regional level. It is thanks to UNFPA funding that we were able to jointly develop the ICPD Monitoring Framework and Regional Report, and facilitate participation in this week’s conference.

Let’s embark on the future with reaffirmed commitment to implement the ICPD Programme of Action in the UNECE region, until its objectives are fully achieved.

Thank you.
