

Regional Conference on International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

Thematic Session: Population dynamics and sustainable development

Let me start with a reference to the report which has been commissioned prior to this Conference.

The report calls for countries in the region to design human-rights-based public policies.

Policies that build on individual potential and capabilities rather than demographic anxiety.

Policies that advance gender equality in order to address demographic challenges.

The report also makes reference that a holistic, life-course, and rights-based approach to population dynamics and sustainable development is required.

Ukraine fully agrees with the suggested approach.

However, as we speak, russian aggressors continue killing thousands of innocent civilians - children, elderly people, women, and men.

It is also not surprising that inside such terrorist countries as Russia, there is no space for human rights, human dignity, free choice, or gender equality.

I trust that vast majority of this distinguished and honorable forum would agree that aggression, killings and rapes, other war atrocities, severe violations of the whole spectrum of human rights, and territorial integrity creates an insurmountable barrier to our movement toward demographic resilience, sustainable development and human security.

Nevertheless, Ukraine with the support of the international community has only one choice - Victory, rapid post-war recovery, and development. We will jointly remove that barrier!

Ukraine like many countries in the region is facing serious demographic challenges: declining population, aging, low fertility, and labor migration outside of the country.

We have lost **3.4 million** of its active workforce since the start of the full scale Russian invasion. Before the war, Ukraine had a population of roughly **37 million**. **The war has generated a major demographic crisis in the country.**

- Between **5,3 and 6,2 million people** have left the country.
- Of these, **60%** are people with **high education degrees**.
- Of the 31,6 million people who are still inside the country, **2.8–3 million** are currently unemployed.
- More than **2,7 million people** have disabilities.
- **1+ million** people are **veterans** and
- over **5 million** are **internally displaced people**.

The impact of the war on Ukraine's human capital and associated socio-economic losses yet to be assessed.

But it is already clear that recovery of the human capital will be the key challenge for the post-war country's development.

As our First Lady says, ***if we restore people, people will restore everything. Without people, we will not be able to implement our ambitious recovery plans.***

Let me share a few examples of recent policies and practical solutions that were recently launched by the government of Ukraine:

Right now, our number **1 priority is to retain talents in Ukraine**. That's why we're focusing on the following directions:

1. Ministry of Economy is managing the government support projects with a focus on strengthening the economic capacities of Ukrainian people. Our Grant Programs "Vlasna sprava" (Own business) - micro-grants for launching a business with an obligation to create at least 2 working places and return grant in the form of taxes in 3 years.

More than 30 thousand applications submitted since July 2022. 8 thousand of winners created 15 thousand working places. 60% of winners are women. Applications are submitted online, grant interview – via zoom.

2. In April this year the Ministry of economy launched a new component of this grant program - grants for **veterans and their spouses. This program is gaining momentum, as our defenders are still busy protecting our state from the bloody aggressors.**

Almost 600 applications submitted, 136 winners so far, 45% are veteran spouses.

In partnership with UNFPA the Ministry of Economy is working to support the integration of vulnerable women into local economies. Our partnership with the led network of women's career hubs Vona-hubs provides for better outreach results and coverage for these initiatives.

3. We are providing Vouchers to start a new profession quickly and become more competitive on the labor market, generate income to become economically independent.

We have provided more than 15 thousand vouchers in 2023. The most popular professions are psychologist, nurse, cook, social worker and driver.

4. **Attracting people, including IDPs, to socially useful jobs.** We call this program the Army of Restoration.

61 thousand unemployed of people joined this socially useful jobs program since October 2022. They deliver humanitarian aid, weave camouflage nets, take care of military personnel in hospitals, restore buildings destroyed by russian aggressors, collect firewood for the population.

Finally, just a few days ago together with the First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska in the Ministry of Economy we presented a recently adopted National Strategy for Bridging the Gender Pay Gap in Ukraine until 2030. The strategy provides for the modernization of labor legislation, overcoming gender-based stereotypes and payment discrimination; creating conditions for a comfortable combination of family and professional duties.

Ukraine made a fundamental decision - to develop and improve even despite the war and during the war. By 2030 we plan to decrease the gender pay gap by 5 percentage points in comparison to 2021.

These few examples illustrate that we are full of political will, commitment, and energy, to make Ukraine the country of rights, opportunities, and choices country where everyone wants to live and to be happy.

We, therefore, call international community to continue its support to Ukraine in order to defeat the aggressor, end the war, and restore the country's territorial integrity as reaffirmed by UN General Assembly. I am sure this is achievable and will have a positive effect on the overall security, sustainability and well-being of the Region and the World.

We also call on UN Agencies, and the international community to extend its financial support and expertise for quick post-war recovery, including restoring human capital, achieving demographic resilience, and progressing with the country's sustainable development.

POSSIBLE QUESTION: You have mentioned that over 6 million Ukrainians left the country. Do you think how many of them will return and how the Government of Ukraine sees policies that will let Ukrainian refugees return to Ukraine after the war?

Answer:

Indeed, such a massive, largest in recent European history displacement may have a devastating effect on the country's human capital, including labor forces.

Our estimation is that Ukraine may face a deficit of work of force as 4,5 billion in the long-term perspective.

The first condition for people to consider returning to their country is security and peace. The easiest solution for that is for russia to immediately stop its aggression, expel its troops from our land, and compensate for losses.

Nevertheless, we are optimistic about the prospects of letting our people come back. According to the Center for Economic Strategy, 75 percent of respondents among temporally displaced Ukrainians declare their intention to return to Ukraine.

In addition to security and peace, jobs and access to entrepreneurship, and reskilling and retraining opportunities I mentioned in my speech, this people will need a place to live. By the end of 2023, at least 10,000 Ukrainian families will be able to get preferential mortgages under the YeOselya program.