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**UN Economic Commission of Europe (ECE) Regional Conference on ICPD30
19 - 20 October 2023
Geneva, Switzerland**

Opening Statement by Ms. Diene Keita, UN Assistant Secretary-General and
Deputy Executive Director, Programme, UNFPA

Date: 19 October 2023

Time: 10:00 am - 10:30 am (Geneva time)

Venue: Room XVII, Palais des Nations

Duration : 15 minutes (1416 words)

Esteemed Co-Chairs,

H.E. Mr. Alexei Buzu, Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Republic of Moldova

H.E. Ms. Aurora Diaz-Rato Revuelta, Permanent Representative of Spain to United Nations in Geneva

UNECE Executive Secretary Molcean, dear tatiana

excellencies ,distinguished delegates

esteemed Colleagues and young people , friends,

all protocol observed

Good morning!

I am honored and delighted to be here today to open – together with Executive Secretary Ms. Molcean – the International Conf on Pop and devp 30 th (ICPD30) regional review conference for the UN Economic Commission of Europe (UNECE) region.

At the outset , I would like to acknowledge the commitments of members states and non-state actors pledged at the UNGA78 and SDG Summit to accelerate the breakthroughs and momentum needed to change course and achieve the Sustainable Developments goals by 2030

We’re coming together every 5 years to review the progress we have made towards the ambitious agenda that the world community set almost 30 years ago at the International Conference on Population and Development, the ICPD, held in Cairo in 1994.

Today, as we’re meeting to review progress in the wider European region, it’s worth recalling what a momentous event the ICPD was.

It was a paradigm shift in how we look at population and development.

Since the ICPD conference, there is broad consensus that population is not about achieving abstract numerical targets. It is about making sure people can enjoy their rights, make reproductive choices freely, and realize their full potential.

The Programme of Action adopted by members states in Cairo is as ambitious today as it was then – if not more so.

Much has changed in the world, and in this region, over the past three decades.

There has been a lot of progress towards achieving the ICPD goals, and we will hear more about the findings of the review report in a short while.

But progress hasn't been linear, and the challenges to the ICPD agenda have been mounting. We just heard Ms. Molcean mentioned the overlapping crises we have been facing and the effect they have had on the health and well-being of vulnerable populations.

We are also seeing push backs against gender equality and reproductive rights – often motivated by concerns about demographic change, that are threatening to erode hard-won gains on the ICPD agenda and the SDGs.

I believe it's fair to say that we are at a critical inflection point. Our collective future depends on how we think about and respond to the ties between population and development.

The choices we make can pave the way for a more stable, more resilient, and ultimately more prosperous region.

Excellencies,

We need today an agile political leadership in a complex interconnected rapidly changing world.

The divergent contexts within and across countries , as well as within and across regions underscores the centrality of political leadership if the world is to achieve Rights and choices for all

The 21st Century political leadership is therefore not reserved for the traditional political class or political elite. Increasingly social movements led by women and youth as c-equal partners, and evolving private sector actions have the potential to co-create durable solutions that can address current and future needs

For the nexus , to work differentiated approaches across the humanitarian, development and peace contexts must be agile to respond to shocks and disruptions, oftentimes, unanticipated .

Therefore situating ICPD30 review outcomes alongside the SDG High impact Initiatives to ensure complementarity , coherence and contribution in a world marked by polycrises yet progressively shaped by local solutions is the right thing to do

The region is undergoing unprecedented changes – economically, socially, geopolitically, demographically and environmentally. And how we deal with them will define our common future.

As concerns are on the rise on the effects of demographic change, the principles agreed at the ICPD, and later reflected in the SDGs, serve as a framework for finding constructive, forward-looking and long-term solutions that benefit individuals and societies as a whole.

That is why we must make concerted efforts to fundamentally rethink how we respond to demographic change and collaborate to ignite the changes that are needed for enabling people to realize their potential and making societies demographically resilient.

We need to unleash the power of people and communities to overcome challenges and build more inclusive and sustainable societies. This includes young people – and I would like to welcome the youth representatives here among us. It was a pleasure to meet with many of you yesterday and I am looking forward to your statement today.

The costs of inaction, or even choosing a path of coercion and restricting rights and choices to achieve population targets, are simply too great. We would risk reversing decades of progress on gender equality, and the consequences for the economy and social cohesion would be devastating.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Population-centered development starts with people—with their dignity and human rights. This concept rests at the foundation of both the ICPD Programme of Action and the SDGs.

Despite increasing polarization, there is more that unites us than sets us apart.

It is in the interest of every nation to pursue people-centered development because it creates the conditions for healthy, empowered individuals and vibrant, thriving societies.

It is our responsibility to build broad-based alliances. We need to engage with the many voices calling for the rights of women and other vulnerable people through movements and

initiatives for social justice, equality, and climate action. Vibrant civil society, free media and an engaged academia are vital components of a healthy social fabric. I would like to acknowledge here our partners in the civil society and the fruitful discussion we had yesterday.

Harnessing the potential of demographic change also depends on mobilizing new actors, calling policymakers, legislators, businesses, social movements and others to build social consensus around investing in people's well-being even when budgets are tight.

I would like to acknowledge here the honorable members of parliaments who are with us here today and with whom we had a fruitful exchange yesterday in preparation of this event.

Thirty years ago, the ICPD broke new ground by putting people, not numbers, at the center of development.

Today, this message couldn't be more relevant and urgent in addressing the manifold demographic and other challenges we are facing in the region.

we need **Strategic foresight for a dynamic Future-fit world**

- Common positions shaping Regional reviews and Outcome documents need to be guided by futures thinking to ensure relevance for future generations and a fast evolving world
- Amplified voices of non-state actors - women, youth, social movements, private sector, business community, indigenous population,
- Any international architecture or investment push needs to be matched with and supported by coordinated national actions.
- The Outcome documents from regional ICPD reviews need to be translated into negotiations, and endorsed commitments for the **Pact for the Future**, being the

anticipated document from the Summit of the Future, as the new international consensus on how we collectively deliver a better present world and safeguard the future.

Sustainable Financing for Durable and Just Transformations is a pre requisite to achieve the ICPD agenda through the SDG

- 2023 report on Financing for Sustainable development underscores the urgency for financing sustainable transformations for people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnerships.

Hence firmly situating the ICPD agenda within the current and future financial architecture is sine qua non

- Yet Delaying tailored investments across the Demographic Divide i.e across the life cycle could translate into long lasting costs of inaction. This is not an option.

Only by supporting and promoting individuals' rights and choices, by investing in people's health, education, and opportunities, can we ensure that countries make full use of their potential and the opportunities that demographic change also brings.

Only by implementing gender-responsive and inclusive policies, strengthening human capabilities and ensuring inclusive societies where all people, young and old, can contribute to development, can we achieve demographic resilient, prosperous societies.

Let us all build on the vision set by the ICPD conference in 1994 and make the right choices today for a better tomorrow.

Excellencies we reaffirm to you here by , that the UNFPA and the UN system , commits to be your continuous credible partners, for the present and future generations . Our common Agenda can enable tailored responsive state and non-state actions underpinned by rights and choices, if we collegially decide to make the right investments today , and thrive to leave no one behind .

I thank you all for your kind attention!