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**Economic Commission for Europe****Regional Conference on International Conference  
on Population and Development (ICPD)**

Geneva, 19 and 20 October 2023

**Report of the United Nations Economic Commission for  
Europe Regional Conference on International Conference on  
Population and Development “Population and Development:  
Ensuring Rights and Choices”****I. Introduction**

1. In 2014, the international community reviewed progress on the 20 years of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) at national, regional and global levels. The regional reviews were led by the United Nations regional commissions in close collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Their outcomes contributed to the global review of the ICPD Beyond 2014, which took place at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) and culminated in the twenty-ninth special session of the United Nations General Assembly on 22 September 2014. Concluding the review, CPD in its resolution 2014/1 requested the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the United Nations system and relevant organizations, to continue assessing and reporting on progress towards the full implementation of the Programme of Action of ICPD.

2. In response to the CPD resolution 2014/1, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (EECARO) jointly organized the high-level Regional Conference on ICPD30 under the title “Population and Development: Ensuring Rights and Choices”. The Conference took place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland from 19 to 20 October 2023.

3. Official national delegations from 43 UNECE member States participated in the Conference. The following member States were present: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, and Uzbekistan.

4. The Conference was also attended by representatives of the Council of Europe, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and World Health Organization (WHO). Representatives of various civil society organizations, including youth representatives and experts from



academic institutions also participated in the Conference. In total, 341 participants attended the Conference. The full list of participants and the Conference programme are available at the Conference website.<sup>1</sup>

## A. Opening plenary session

5. Ms. Tatiana Molcean, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, UNECE and Ms. Diene Keita, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UNFPA opened the Conference and welcomed the participants.

6. The Conference confirmed by acclamation the selection of two Co-Chairs to lead the Conference discussions: H.E. Mr. Alexei Buzu, Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova and H.E. Ms. Aurora Díaz-Rato Revuelta, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. The Co-Chairs were confirmed for both days of the Conference. Following a short statement by Israel, the Conference participants adopted the agenda (ECE/AC.32/2023/1).

7. Speaking to the theme of 30 years after Cairo: the ICPD agenda in a changing world, Mr. Stuart Gietel-Basten, Professor of Social Science at Khalifa University, recommended several approaches for responding to demographic challenges in the region while respecting the human-centred principles of ICPD. In his presentation, he stressed that quick fixes do not exist, and encouraged countries to develop policies that are grounded in evidence rather than ideology, aligned with international agendas, and that focus on individual potential and quality of life. Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reflected on the continuing relevance of the ICPD agenda. Mr. Türk acknowledged the progress made since 1994 in securing women's sexual and reproductive rights but also pointed out that the ICPD agenda is unfinished in the UNECE region and called on countries to recommit to the fundamental promises of Cairo. Ms. Inge Maiberg from the Special Olympics Estonia shared her perspective as a person living with a disability.

8. Ms. Florence Bauer, Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA and Ms. Lisa Warth, Chief of the Population Unit, UNECE presented the Regional Report on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) in the UNECE Region "Ensuring Rights and Choices amid Demographic Change". They shared the findings from the report, highlighting how recent crises have impacted key population and development trends in the UNECE region and identifying areas where it is necessary to accelerate efforts. Recommendations for advancing progress on the ICPD PoA in the UNECE region were also presented (Extracts from the UNECE Regional Report on ICPD30 – ECE/AC.32/2023/3).

9. The launch of the Regional Report was followed by statements by member States.<sup>2</sup> National delegates welcomed the Regional Report and its recommendations. They acknowledged the enduring relevance of ICPD in the current regional context, highlighted the role of the ICPD agenda in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, and reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the ICPD PoA in their countries. Delegates called for the publication of the Regional Report and suggested it inform the upcoming global review of ICPD at the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development. They also stressed the linkages between ICPD and other initiatives such as the Summit of the Future. In their statements, member States highlighted national progress in implementing the ICPD PoA but they also acknowledged gaps in implementation and the impact of recent crises across the region.

10. Following the subscribed interventions, statements in exercise of the right to reply were made by Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation and Armenia.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://unece.org/population/icpd30>.

<sup>2</sup> A list of subscribed interventions during the plenary and thematic discussions is included in Annex II. The texts of delivered statements are available on the Conference website (<https://unece.org/population/icpd30>).

<sup>3</sup> Listed in order of interventions.

11. Parliamentarians, civil society organizations (CSOs), and youth delegates from the region held their respective consultations on the days preceding the Conference. Designated representatives delivered statements on behalf of each group, highlighting significant gaps in the implementation of the ICPD PoA in the region. Parliamentarians described an erosion of reproductive rights and bodily autonomy in the region and called for action to improve comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), address gender-based violence, work towards marriage equality, and ensure equal access to contraception, safe abortion services, and infertility services. CSO representatives called for renewed commitments to human rights and gender equality and advocated for an intersectional approach to persisting and emerging inequalities including through the collection and dissemination of disaggregated data. Youth delegates expressed frustration at continued exclusion from decision-making processes and urged action to improve access to education, employment, and mental health services.

## **B. Thematic sessions**

12. The Conference discussions were organized in three thematic sessions. The first thematic session focused on Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development; the second session on Families, Sexual and Reproductive Health over the Life Course, and the third session on Inequalities, Social Inclusion and Rights. Each thematic session started with a panel discussion<sup>4</sup> and was followed by statements and comments from national delegations, CSOs, and youth representatives and concluded with a short summary of the panel discussions by a rapporteur.

13. The first thematic session on “Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development” discussed the impacts of low fertility, population ageing and migration on economic outcomes and sustainable development in the UNECE region. Speakers noted that the impacts of demographic change on human capital and economic growth can be managed through policies that support individuals across the life course. Support for parents of young children, combatting persisting gender inequalities, investments in youth and older persons, and commitments to migrant integration were discussed as key strategies for adjusting to demographic change and strengthening demographic resilience in the region.

14. Fertility rates continue to fall in most UNECE countries, and a return to replacement level fertility is unlikely. Families of all forms face barriers to realizing their fertility intentions. Traditional gender norms and persisting gender disparities at work and at home mean many women still must choose between having the number of children they desire and fulfilling their potential in the labour market. To sustain birth rates and capitalize on women’s productive potential amid shrinking labour forces, panellists emphasized the need for gender-sensitive policies that support work-family reconciliation for all family types. Speakers identified several areas where focused efforts can accelerate progress including the expansion of early childhood education and care services, the implementation and uptake of gender-balanced parental leave, the adoption of flexible work arrangements, and promotion of family-friendly workplaces.

15. Panellists highlighted the need for investments in individual capabilities across the life course to respond to the changing composition of the region’s workforce. With skills and talents that can be developed to match labour market needs, the critical role of youth was emphasized. Speakers discussed policies and programmes to improve the physical, mental and reproductive health of youth and support their transition from quality education to decent work. In the face of widespread population ageing, the ongoing need to support active and healthy ageing and the productive engagement of older persons was discussed. Panellists advocated for the mainstreaming of ageing across policy areas and levels of government, an ongoing focus on the human rights of older persons and working to combat age-based discrimination.

16. The complexity of migration flows in the UNECE region was highlighted. For some countries, immigration plays an important role in meeting labour needs, bolstering fertility rates, and sustaining social security systems. In other countries, out-migration accelerates

<sup>4</sup> For the list of speakers see Conference programme (<http://www.unece.org/population/icpd30>).

population decline, exacerbates urban-rural disparities, and leads to brain drain. Panellists emphasized that safe, orderly and regular migration can benefit sending and receiving countries through circularity, human capital development, and the diffusion of technology. Speakers called for a whole-of-government approach that treats migration as a cross-cutting issue that extends beyond border control to include integration and inclusion strategies. The technological context of demographic change was discussed. Speakers acknowledged the potential of digital technologies to reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion but also the risk that unequal access could further marginalize certain groups. The need for timely, accessible, and disaggregated data was emphasized.

17. Member States highlighted progress towards closing gender gaps in employment and unpaid work, improving work-family balance through parental leave and measures to promote flexible work, and strengthening individual capacities and choices across the life course. The essential role of the ICPD principles in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the importance of a rights-based approach to population dynamics and sustainable development were underlined. CSO representatives called for the protection of the human rights of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, and those affected by conflict and climate change. They advocated for environments that enable active and healthy ageing and greater investments in data. Youth delegates insisted on universal access to quality education and health care services as well as the meaningful participation of youth in decision-making processes.

18. The second thematic session focused on “Families, Sexual and Reproductive Health over the Life Course”. Panellists acknowledged improvements in access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and services but stressed that certain groups are being left behind. Youth, women with disabilities, low-income women, and other hard-to-reach individuals continue to face barriers to essential SRH information and services, contributing to poorer outcomes for these groups. Speakers expressed concern that many women across the region and especially those with a disability are deprived of bodily autonomy, lacking agency to make choices about their bodies and futures. Measures to address gender-based and sexual violence were shared, and panellists advocated for further action to raise awareness and address harmful norms and attitudes. Progress in strengthening antenatal care in line with WHO recommendations was noted, but stalled progress on maternal mortality was underlined as an area of concern. Speakers also emphasized the need to look beyond maternal mortality and address maternal morbidities, many of which disproportionately affect younger and older women, migrant women, and ethnic and racial minorities. The need for disaggregated data on maternal health outcomes and investments in surveillance systems was emphasized.

19. The panel underlined the importance of age-appropriate, evidence-based and scientifically accurate CSE. Persisting challenges in implementing effective CSE across the region were discussed, including insufficient teacher training, a lack of standards, and the proliferation of misinformation online and via social media. Panellists suggested that CSE curricula also consider the mental health and well-being of youth and cover topics such as consent, bodily autonomy, and rights. Speakers recognized the ability of SRH services to prevent health challenges throughout the life course and advocated for the integration of gender equality and universal human rights as guiding principles in the development and delivery of SRH information and services. The issue of cervical cancer prevalence in the region was raised and the need to expand access to the HPV vaccine and cervical cancer screening and treatment was acknowledged. The panel also called for access to affordable, high-quality infertility care.

20. During the second thematic session, several member States intervened to share national progress towards improving access to SRH information and services including through the innovative use of digital technologies, user-friendly formats for persons with a disability, and free contraception for young people. Measures to improve maternity care, prevent gender-based violence, and support families in fulfilling their fertility intentions were also shared. A number of countries reported measures to improve access to safe abortion care. The ongoing need to do more to reach excluded groups such as youth, older persons, migrants and refugees, persons with a disability, people living with HIV and the LGBTIQI+ community was referenced by several countries. CSO and youth representatives echoed many of

sentiments expressed by panellists and member States, calling for free access to contraception and safe abortion services, the implementation of mandatory CSE in schools, and prioritizing the sexual and reproductive health and rights of underrepresented communities.

21. The third thematic session on “Inequalities, Social Inclusion and Rights” addressed gender equality, ageism and other forms of discrimination, and the situation of vulnerable population groups. Panellists voiced concern about the persisting gender inequalities and stereotypes that sustain disparities in the labour force and in private life and perpetuate violence and harmful practices against women and girls. The compounding effects of intersecting characteristics and identities was acknowledged. Migrant women, for example, face barriers to maternal care in some countries, and women with a disability often confront discrimination in health-care systems. Speakers recognized the widening of gender gaps with age, including digital gender divides and inequalities between women and men in income, pensions, and social exclusion. The continuing challenge to eradicate violence against women, sexual harassment and sexual violence was emphasized, and speakers expressed the need to involve men and boys in order to achieve gender equality and secure the human rights of women and girls.

22. Panellists discussed the harmful impacts of age-based discrimination and the ongoing challenge to guarantee the rights of older persons and recognize their contributions to families and societies. Speakers acknowledged the increased risk among some older persons of poverty, social exclusion, loneliness, and social isolation. The pivotal role of education systems in addressing socioeconomic inequalities by providing quality education to all children and youth was also emphasized. Minority groups such as persons with a disability, people living with HIV, migrants, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQI+ persons continue to face exclusion, material deprivation and inferior educational and health outcomes. They are often subject to multiple vulnerabilities, stigma and negative stereotypes that need to be addressed to ensure social inclusion, equal opportunities and the protection of human rights. Panellist highlighted the importance of ratifying and implementing relevant international conventions and instruments. The importance of cooperation and partnerships across countries, sectors, levels of government, and with non-governmental actors was emphasized, and so was the importance of including those impacted by policies in decision-making processes.

23. Member States shared progress towards equal and inclusive societies, including the establishment of new government offices, strategies, laws, and budget lines on gender equality, gender-based violence, youth, and migrant integration, among others. Countries reported the adoption of quotas in public and private institutions to improve representation of women and persons with a disability. In addition to progress, interventions acknowledged setbacks and backlash against gender equality, and the continued need to apply the “leave no one behind” principle to achieve the ICPD and 2030 agendas. CSO representatives called for legal instruments that combat gender-based violence and eradicate all forms of discrimination. They advocated for an intersectional and active approach to promote equality and highlighted the important role of CSOs in this work. Youth delegates issued a call for universal fulfilment of human rights including for those in conflict areas through inclusive decision-making and environments that allow all persons and especially youth to shape their own futures.

24. During the thematic sessions, member States also requested the transmission of the Regional Report on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) in the UNECE Region and the Conference report to the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development in April 2024.

25. Several international organizations participated in the Conference, highlighting gaps and progress in implementation of ICPD PoA and committing to integrate relevant issues raised in the ICPD30 regional review into national and regional initiatives related to their own work and mandates.

### **C. Closing plenary session of the Conference**

26. During the closing plenary session, H.E. Ms. Aurora Díaz-Rato Revuelta, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations Office and other

international organizations in Geneva presented highlights from the two days of Conference discussions (see Annex I).

27. Ms. Lisa Warth, Chief, Population Unit of UNECE, presented an outline of the draft report of the Conference noting that the Conference report including the annexed highlights from the Conference discussion will inform the fifty-seventh session of CPD in 2024. Mr. Arthur Erken, Director, Policy and Strategy Division of UNFPA, informed Conference delegates about the global 30-year review process of ICPD implementation (ICPD30), which will be informed by ICPD30 regional reviews and culminate at the fifty-seventh session of CPD in 2024. In his remarks he explained that ICPD30 will not replace the 1994 ICPD PoA but it aims to renew international momentum towards implementing the ICPD and 2030 agendas.

28. In the closing remarks, Ms. Diene Keita, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UNPFA and Ms. Tatiana Molcean, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, UNECE underlined the continued relevance of the ICPD PoA and called for a renewed commitment to its implementation to ensure all individuals can exercise their rights and freely make choices that allow them to realize their full potential. They acknowledged progress but also echoed the call of participants for accelerated effort to address long-standing disparities and recent setbacks.

29. H.E. Mr. Alexei Buzu thanked the organizers from UNFPA and UNECE as well as all speakers and delegates for contributions. He closed the Conference by reminding participants that the implementation of ICPD PoA depends on political will and encouraging all participants to continuing working towards its realization.

## Annex I

### Highlights from the Conference discussions<sup>5</sup>

**Highlights from the discussions at the Regional Conference on ICPD30 “Population and Development: Ensuring Rights and Choices”** organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Population Fund Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Geneva on 19 and 20 October 2023.

*Presented by the Co-Chairs of the Conference, H.E. Mr. Alexei Buzu, Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Republic of Moldova, and H.E. Ms. Aurora Díaz-Rato Revuelta, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.*

Excellencies,

Dear delegates,

As the ICPD30 Conference for the UNECE region is coming to an end, we’re pleased to present some highlights of our discussions over the past two days.

We’d like to stress that this is not a comprehensive account; a report of the Conference deliberations will be made available later.

This is also not an official Chair’s Summary. The 2013 Chair’s Summary remains the reference document for the implementation of the ICPD Beyond 2014 agenda.

In the opening session, many member States reaffirmed their commitments to the principles agreed at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and to implementing the ICPD Programme of Action, as well as related international frameworks such as the Beijing Platform for Action.

Delegations welcomed the regional report on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the priorities identified in the 2013 Chair’s Summary. Many speakers echoed the conclusions of the report, welcoming the progress made and voicing concern about remaining gaps in implementation and persisting inequalities both within and between countries.

A number of delegations expressed concern about the effects of overlapping crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and an increasing number of armed conflicts, and about pushbacks against some elements of the ICPD agenda, warning also that progress in some areas has slowed down or is being reversed, and that there was a risk of hard-won gains being lost.

In light of these challenges, several delegations called for a renewed commitment and global political consensus around the ICPD and its Programme of Action. They also stressed the need to link the ICPD Programme of Action to the High-Impact Initiatives of the United Nations, as well as the Summit of the Future.

The plenary heard keynote presentations highlighting the importance of building bridges between different stakeholders and addressing population issues in a comprehensive manner with a focus on both population numbers, on the one hand, and evidence- and rights-based approaches, on the other.

In light of increasing demographic concerns, the principles and goals of the ICPD Programme of Action and the outcome documents of its review conferences remain as relevant as ever.

It was emphasized that there are no quick, top-down fixes for the demographic challenges the region is facing, and that it is imperative to ask – sometimes difficult – questions about the root causes of the symptoms that are often seen as a demographic crisis. However, there is ample ground to unite around a common vision of fulfilling and realizing the potential of all people, including women and the most marginalized, and developing solutions based on sound evidence.

<sup>5</sup> Published as presented during the closing session of the Conference.

Many delegations reported progress towards achieving the ICPD Programme of Action. They cited new laws, policies, strategies and programmes in areas such as gender equality and women's empowerment, involving men and responsible parenting, countering gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage, promoting the rights of youth and older persons, and healthy ageing, ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health, including maternal health, safe abortion services, strengthening comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly and disability-inclusive services, ending the HIV epidemic, as well as dealing more broadly with social determinants including measures to end discrimination, and address harmful gender and social norms that perpetuate inequalities.

Several speakers emphasized how investing in people and enabling them to fulfil their potential benefits not only individuals, but societies as a whole. As such, the ICPD agenda provides a relevant framework and guide for countries to address the demographic and socio-economic challenges they are facing and build demographically resilient, prosperous societies.

Some delegations drew attention to the importance of supporting and addressing the needs and expectations of all families in the context of the socioeconomic and demographic challenges the region is facing.

Several delegations emphasized the centrality of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and sexual and reproductive health and rights. It was stressed in this context by some speakers that, in order to ensure that no one is left behind, an intersectional approach is needed to understand and address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and structural drivers of inequalities.

A number of delegations spoke about the importance of ensuring bodily autonomy and the right of women and girls to make decisions about their bodies and lives free from discrimination, violence or coercion.

Participants emphasized that understanding the link between population dynamics and climate change helps design sustainable policies for a greener planet.

Parliamentarians participating in the Conference recalled the key role they can play in human-centred and human rights-based policy development and stressed how stronger political will is fundamental to addressing the challenges the region is facing.

Civil society organizations present at the Conference called on Governments to refrain from action undermining gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, counter the shrinking of the space for civil society in many countries, reform laws and policies in line with international standards, strengthen non-discrimination legislation, and adopt an intersectional approach to developing and implementing policies, to take into account the rights and needs of the most vulnerable.

Youth representatives made a passionate plea for inclusion of young people in decision-making processes at all levels, and called for the voices of youth to be heard and taken into account when decisions are made, stressing that youth inclusion benefits society as a whole. They emphasized the need to take into account all vulnerable groups and highlighted the particular challenges faced by young people with disabilities.

During the first thematic session on population dynamics and sustainable development, several delegations voiced concern about the socioeconomic effects of demographic changes such as low fertility rates and population decline, rapid population ageing and pressure on public budgets, shrinking working age population and labour and skills shortages, as well as complex migration movements.

A number of delegations also stressed that demographic change can present opportunities, if the right measures are taken to prepare for and adapt to changing demographic realities.

Speakers emphasized that population policies must be rooted in human rights and gender equality, and the right of individuals and couples to choose if and when to have children, and how many, must be respected.

Several speakers expressed the need to invest in human capital and create an enabling environment for people, including women, young people, older persons, migrants and other



marginalized people, to fulfil their potential as a precondition for addressing demographic change successfully.

It was pointed out that people generally want two or more children in the region, but end up having fewer due to a variety of barriers, including difficulties for women, in particular, in combining career and family duties and the unequal distribution of unpaid work at home.

It was noted that men are more likely to be employed than women in all countries of the region, and women spend fewer hours of paid work and more hours of unpaid care work than men, a gap that widens considerably when women have children.

Closing the employment gap between men and women would have significant economic benefits. It requires a redistribution of unpaid care work, including through expanding paternity leave benefits, and measures to enable men and women to balance work and family responsibilities, including through family-friendly workplaces and the provision of accessible, affordable and quality day care for small children.

It was also noted that the demographic challenge is a true democratic challenge which requires fighting for social justice and against inequalities among territories and people. Public policies for socio-territorial cohesion have to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment to lead the processes of change required and through a cross-cutting vision that fosters the integrated development of territories.

It was pointed out that the spread of the Internet and mobile technologies can affect a variety of demographic outcomes, but benefits may be more pronounced for higher skilled workers.

A number of delegations shared experiences with strengthening demographic resilience at the national level. This included the development of comprehensive, inclusive youth policies, embracing immigration as a driver of economic growth and innovation, and strategies to support healthy and active ageing in line with the life course approach.

Some delegations reported on their efforts to stimulate higher fertility rates by providing financial benefits and incentives and other forms of support to families.

There was wide recognition that financial incentives alone do not work, and a set of comprehensive policy responses is needed to enable people to realize their fertility intentions.

It was also pointed out that promoting immigration must not lead to brain drain in sending countries, but should lead to benefits for sending countries, for example through circular migration and cross-fertilization.

The need for more and better quality disaggregated data came up in several interventions. It is needed to strengthen the evidence base for policy formulation and to explain interrelationships between different factors that affect demographic outcomes.

During the second thematic session, on families and sexual and reproductive health over the life course, speakers presented the progress that has been made in this field, both at national and regional level, including the development and implementation of the national SRH policies and strategies, taking into account and responding to evolving needs across different life stages.

Several delegations restated that the access to sexual and reproductive health is a human right. They emphasized the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and young people in particular, as well as for sustainable development more broadly.

It was stated that large disparities exist especially with regard to access to SRH services for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including young people, people of colour, migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, and LGBTQI+ community. There were strong calls for removing the barriers marginalized people are facing in accessing SRH services and information.

It was noted that for young people the barriers for accessing modern contraception include lack of knowledge, high cost, and judgemental attitudes of health-care workers.

Some delegations reported on measures, or plans, to introduce free contraceptives for young people.

There was strong support from many delegations for ensuring that age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education is available to all young people, from an early age on and as part of mandatory school curricula, and for challenges such as lack of quality and insufficient teacher training to be addressed. A number of speakers stressed the importance of ensuring the mental health and well-being of young people.

A number of delegations reported measures to expand access to safe abortion care, including through reducing barriers such as mandatory waiting periods. Some delegations informed about efforts to reduce recourse to abortion.

In light of slowing progress on eliminating preventable maternal mortality, the vital importance of robust health information systems was underscored for formulating effective interventions.

A number of delegations recognized the diversity of families in the region. A range of policies and programmes were presented that are designed to support families. Addressing the growing incidence of infertility, some countries have invested in making fertility treatments available as part of national insurance schemes.

The need to address stigma, harmful social norms and misinformation was raised by a number of speakers, and it was stressed that men and boys need to be engaged in conversations around sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Improved access and utilization of digital technologies and AI was reported by participants, including telemedicine as an effective method for providing SRH services and information.

In the third thematic session on inequalities, social inclusion and rights, speakers stressed that gender equality and women's empowerment create strong communities, stable economies, and resilient societies and cause lasting positive change.

As such it was highlighted that advancing gender equality and the rights of vulnerable groups must be the priority for Governments, at the national level and as part of international cooperation strategies.

Speakers noted that despite progress, challenges to gender equality still persist. They discussed the need for multidimensional transformational approaches that address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and combat stereotypes.

Delegations highlighted the importance of anti-discrimination laws and policies, and their corresponding monitoring mechanisms, and the importance of comprehensive gender equality policies that also involve men and boys.

Several speakers raised concerns about anti-gender narratives and their negative effects on human rights and people's access to services, as well as the shrinking of civic space, for women, human rights defenders, youth and marginalized communities.

Delegations highlighted the importance of increasing efforts to promote women's participation in decision-making positions, including in parliaments and Governments, and peace processes.

It was pointed out that recent crises have had a devastating impact on children and their families, in particular children with disabilities, children on the move and children from Roma communities, and that inclusive social protection systems must be in place to guarantee equitable access to support and benefits.

Speakers noted the importance of institutions to protect and promote human rights, including rights for LGBTIQ+ persons.

Delegations reported on advances at the national level in legal frameworks and strategies to address and prevent all forms of gender-based violence. It was stressed that the elimination of gender-based violence requires a whole-of-society effort, addressing root causes and eliminating all gender inequalities.

In light of evidence showing that women are more likely than men to be affected by poverty, speakers called for stronger social protection and social services to promote social inclusion.

Several speakers highlighted the vulnerability of older persons, and of older women in particular, due to the intersection between ageing and gender, as a result of disadvantages accumulated over the life course.

It was noted that policies and strategies are needed to address discrimination against older people and improve their access to services and benefits and address poverty. There were calls for a paradigm shift towards seeing older people and older women as rights holders and active agents of sustainable development.

Many speakers drew attention to the needs of people with disabilities, and their right to live their lives and access services free from discrimination and stigma, coercion and violence, and to be included in decision-making.

It was stressed that fighting stigma and discrimination is key for efforts to end the HIV epidemic in the region.

It was recommended that the outcome of the ICPD30 review be fed into the 2024 Commission on Population and Development, the 2024 Summit of the Future, as well as national and regional consultations related to Beijing+30 and the voluntary national review of 2030 Agenda.

## **Annex II**

### **List of subscribed statements**

#### **Plenary**

1. North Macedonia
2. Norway
3. Denmark
4. Georgia
5. Belarus
6. Armenia
7. Switzerland
8. Sweden
9. Kazakhstan
10. United States of America
11. Germany
12. Serbia
13. Bosnia and Herzegovina
14. Kingdom of the Netherlands
15. Albania
16. Ukraine
17. Türkiye
18. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
19. European Union
20. Finland
21. Austria
22. Portugal
23. Parliamentarians
24. Civil society
25. Youth

#### **First thematic session: Population dynamics and sustainable development**

1. Denmark
2. Belarus
3. Armenia
4. United States of America
5. Germany
6. Republic of Moldova
7. Russian Federation

8. Bulgaria
9. Civil society
10. Youth

### **Second thematic session: Families, sexual and reproductive health over the life course**

1. Belarus
2. Armenia
3. Sweden
4. United States of America
5. Bosnia and Herzegovina
6. Ukraine
7. Turkmenistan
8. Portugal
9. European Union
10. Spain
11. France
12. Finland
13. Kingdom of the Netherlands
14. Russian Federation
15. Kazakhstan
16. Civil society
17. Youth
18. IPPF-Norway
19. French Family Planning

### **Third thematic session: Inequalities, social inclusion and rights**

1. Denmark
2. Belarus
3. Kazakhstan
4. United States of America
5. Bosnia and Herzegovina
6. Ukraine
7. Luxembourg
8. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
9. European Union
10. Portugal
11. Uzbekistan
12. Civil society
13. Youth

14. UNICEF
15. IPPF EN

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