



Statement by the European Union and its Member States

**Special Session of the General Assembly on the Follow-up to the Programme of Action
of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014
*22 September 2014***

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

The European Union and its Member States welcome the holding of this special session celebrating the 20th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development and its Programme of Action. This provides a unique opportunity for the international community to reflect on the progress made since 1994 but also on the many challenges remaining beyond 2014, in a comprehensive manner on all aspects of the Cairo agenda at the intersection of development and human rights.

The ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Review, with its strong focus on human rights and extensive evidence-based research, provides compelling evidence as to the importance of individual rights and capabilities as the driver for all areas of development, with poverty and inequality still being identified as the main threats to the fulfillment of the Programme of Action. The key findings and recommendations of the Global Review, the outcomes of the respective regional conferences and the Index Report by the Secretary General all together provide a holistic vision for governments to demonstrate political will to address, together with civil society, gaps in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and to respond to new challenges.

Dramatic improvements have been achieved, for example on maternal and child mortality, and good progress was made on other aspects such as access to services like family planning and, more specifically contraception. However, progress has been insufficient, fragmented and uneven.

We cannot expect progress in development unless human rights, women's empowerment and gender equality are upheld as essential preconditions for equitable and inclusive sustainable development. Progress in development also requires the full participation of young people, the elderly and marginalized groups, especially persons with disabilities.

Mister Chair,

Over the past 20 years The EU and its Member States have strongly promoted human rights and anti-discrimination, gender equality and women's empowerment and provided considerable support for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in areas such as education, health services, safe drinking water and sanitation, benefiting millions, women and men, girls and boys, older and younger, especially the most vulnerable, thus contributing to reduce inequalities.

Development and human rights are interrelated and we are committed to move towards a rights-based approach in EU development policy. Human rights violations are both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Persistent inequalities are faced by groups that are discriminated against on the basis of their age, gender, race, ethnicity, HIV status, marital status and sexual orientation or gender identity, including through the persistence of discriminatory laws, or the unfair and discriminatory application of laws. To eradicate poverty more effectively, development policy must take a holistic approach that addresses the human, economic, environmental, social and political dimensions of development.

We remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences and in this context sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We believe that universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, provided inter alia through integrated quality health care, is one of the highest priorities for the global agenda beyond 2014 and is essential to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Moreover, promoting and ensuring universal, affordable, and gender-sensitive access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, as well as to comprehensive evidence-based education on human sexuality, consistent with the needs and evolving capacities of the individual, is crucial to improving maternal, new-born and child health, to improving family planning and access to quality modern methods of contraception, to preventing and managing HIV and AIDS, free from stigma and discrimination, and to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Mister Chair,

The EU and its Member States have an active policy to promote gender equality - especially as regards education of girls at all levels - and to ensure that our programmes reach vulnerable and marginalized population groups. We also pursue a zero-tolerance policy towards female genital mutilation and are working with partner countries around the world to stamp out this and other forms of gender-based violence, including child, early and forced marriage, which violates the rights of women and girls and harms them in so many ways.

Mister chair,

Population dynamics reflect the world's dramatic disparities and varied trends: the emergence of age groups with critical development needs need to be recognized, in particular youth and older people. Population dynamics must be addressed and harnessed by rights-based and gender-responsive policies, and investment in human capital throughout the life course, as well as by strengthening population statistics.

Migration, including internal migration, is both an opportunity and a challenge for development, with significant economic, social and environmental impacts for countries of origin and destination, as well as for migrants themselves. The EU and its Member States are pursuing efforts to maximize the positive impact of development in tackling migration issues, for instance by increasingly integrating migration into development cooperation. All states should ensure that migrants are able to fully exercise their fundamental rights. Better organizing legal migration and fostering well-managed mobility, including by taking into account the role of diaspora communities, can act as powerful tools for reducing poverty and enhancing opportunities for individuals.

To conclude, Mister Chair, the EU and its Member States would like to reaffirm our support for the centrality of the ICPD agenda. The principles and objectives of the Programme of Action, as well as those of the Beijing Platform for Action, along with the key actions for their further implementation, should be carried forward beyond 2014, with a focus on the gaps identified in the reviews, and ought to be taken into account in the formulation of the post-2015 agenda.

I thank you.