



**The Permanent Mission of Iceland  
to the United Nations**

**Statement by  
H.E. Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade**

**Twenty-ninth special session of the General Assembly  
on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International  
Conference on Population and Development**

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**Madam/Mr. Chair,**

**The international conference on population and development in Cairo was groundbreaking. It was the first time we came together, as sovereign nations, to address the impact of the growing world population and agreed on concrete measures to deliver a more equal and sustainable world for all.**

**At the conference we recognized the linkage between our everyday activities with the use of natural resources, the state of the environment, and the pace and quality of economic and social development.**

**We also recognized that gender equality and empowerment of women should be a global priority. That women's ability to access sexual and reproductive health and rights is a cornerstone of their empowerment. Not only from a human rights perspective but as key for sustainable development, eradicating poverty and stabilizing population growth.**

**In short, the world agreed that population is not just about counting people, but about making sure that every person counts.**

**Madam/Mr. Chair,**

**We have made great progress in several areas in the last 20 years. However, this progress has been uneven and slow, in particular for women and girls. To step up progress, it is vital to increase focus on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls.**

Programmes on family planning, maternal health services, HIV prevention, information and education are relatively inexpensive with clear benefits to society as a whole. Economically, the return on investment can be as high as 150 US dollars per dollar spent.

**Madam/Mr. Chair,**

**All efforts must be made to end violence against women and impunity for perpetrators. This includes eradicating domestic violence which is a disgrace in all our societies as well as all harmful practices against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Additionally, the importance of ensuring universal access for all victims and survivors of gender-based violence to critical services cannot be understated.**

**We also need to accelerate progress to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health information, education and services that protect the rights to privacy, confidentiality, informed choice and voluntary consent and prohibit any form of discrimination, coercion or violence.**

Emphasis must be placed on adolescent girls, as well as ending maternal deaths and morbidities due to unsafe abortion.

This should include comprehensive sexuality education for all young people to enable them to make informed decisions and plan their lives and protect themselves from sexual and reproductive health problems. Such education also promotes respect for human rights and gender equality as well as mutual respect and non-violence in relationships, tolerance, responsible parenthood and equal rights within families and relationships.

**Madam/Mr. Chair,**

**Iceland is fully committed to the further implementation of ICPD. We have a valuable opportunity in 2015 when we will be renewing our commitments and adopting a new development agenda. The promises from Cairo must be among the goals and targets agreed.**

**In this regard, allow me to reiterate that we welcome and endorse the recent global review report of the Secretary General<sup>1</sup> as an essential contribution to the Post-2015 Development Agenda.**

**Madam/Mr. Chair,**

**Allow me also to commend the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and its Executive Director for their leadership and critical work in fulfilling the ICPD Programme of Action.**

**Iceland is proud to support UNFPA's efforts, in particular on the elimination of harmful practices against women and girls, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and on fistula which could be easily eradicated if more Member States join the efforts of the UNFPA.**

**Madam/Mr. Chair,**

**We don't need new commitments, new negotiations, new words. We need to do what we promised to do and fulfill the promises of Cairo. Not only because it's the smart thing to do but because these promises concern the fulfillment of the fundamental human rights of each one of us.**

**Madam/Mr. Chair, we have to make sure that every person counts.**

**Thank you.**

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<sup>1</sup> Framework of Action for the follow up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014, document nr. A/69/62