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**General debate on national experience in population matters:
“Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015
Development agenda”**

Statement submitted by Priests for Life, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council²

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

¹ E/CN.9/2016/1.

² The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda

Priests for Life believes that demographic evidence is critical to the post-2015 development agenda. Recognizing the global changes that have occurred in the number, sex, and age of people is especially important for policy development in the next 15 years.

Accurate counting of people should begin with the registration of births. It is currently estimated that 220 million children around the world lack birth registration. This lack of recognition contributes to a lack of protection. Birth registration for all children leads to greater protection for children who are recognized by their governments and given access to education, social services, and health care. Birth registration helps reunite children separated from their parents during a natural disaster or conflict.

Girls must be counted. A number of countries face challenges related to the large number of missing women whose lives were ended when they were identified in the womb through sex determination techniques and then aborted. Countries impacted by this, face unprecedented social problems affecting people in their everyday lives.

Despite calls in the Beijing Platform to “Enact and enforce legislation protecting girls from all forms of violence, including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection” there has not been a concerted effort to stop this practice which was introduced with the intent that unborn baby girls would be aborted in order to prevent them from becoming mothers.

The impact of sex selective abortion on demography must be taken into account. “It’s a girl” continues to be the three most dangerous words in the world in countries and cultures with a male preference reflecting an anti-girl attitude that grossly undermines women’s empowerment and contributes to the pervasive attitude that the lives of girls have less value than those of boys affecting access to nutrition, health care, and education.

Disproportionate sex ratios impact the dignity of women whose low numbers in affected countries, especially China, results in too few marriageable women for a large male population that seeks to marry. Negative consequences result impacting women’s lives including increases in violence, sex trafficking, kidnappings, forced prostitution, and enslavement as a “shared wife”.

The current imbalance has impacted the lives of elderly citizens who do not enjoy the love and support of a family and need policies that provide for their care and protection. The targeted death of preborn girls has resulted in millions of missing daughters and daughters-in-law who, if allowed to be born, would be the caregivers for elderly members of the family today.

Universally, women are the heart of the family, the foundation of society. They care for children in the womb and after birth; they care for the sick, disabled, and elderly. Women commit themselves to the very survival of others and contribute to the overall well-being of the individual.

Without traditional female family caregivers, governments are struggling to find ways to provide for ageing populations. A myriad of concerns are growing in

regards to elder care, including those surrounding the growing number of care-dependent older adults in institutional care settings who suffer from cognitive impairment, including Alzheimer's disease.

Reduction in fertility has resulted in an absence of young workers who can contribute to social security and pension programmes and who can replace elderly workers who are forced to work longer because there is no one to take their place.

According to the World Ageing Population Report 2013, the older population in less developed regions is growing faster than in the more developed regions, and that 8 in 10 of the world's older population will be living in less developed regions of the world by 2050.

The total number of older persons living around the world is projected to exceed the number of children alive in the world for the first time in 2047. The number of older persons (aged 60 years or over) is expected to more than double, from 841 million people in 2013 to more than 2 billion in 2050 affecting economic growth, savings, investments, consumption of goods and services, pensions, taxes, labour markets, living arrangements, and health care services.

Priests for Life expresses its concern that respect for the lives of those most advanced in years will be diminished and they will face increased pressure for euthanasia and assisted suicide.

A number of governments have responded to the demographic imbalance of ageing populations in their country by working to increase the birth rate and reduce the abortion rate. They realize the value of each and every preborn child and are working to ensure healthy reproduction where both mother and child survive and thrive. Efforts to provide women with the support they need have also been implemented globally.

Recognition of demographic reality in a number of countries has resulted in a reassessment of programmes and policies on reproductive health, sexual health, reproductive rights, population control, and family planning with the emergence of policies to restrict abortion on demand.

Priests for Life believes that abortion ends the life of one patient and may injure the other physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Programmes which include access to abortion treat women's unique reproductive capabilities as a problem rather than recognizing and assisting the universally valued role of mother.

Pope Francis in his address to the United Nations General Assembly called for respect of all lives and stated, "The common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned, those considered disposable because they are only considered as part of a statistic".

Priests for Life concurs that our common home rises on the foundations that affirm the well-being, dignity and worth of all — every human life without exception including the unborn — and that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must lead to a world which recognizes and respects the worth of all lives, from conception to natural death, and ensures "that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment" as declared in Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.