



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on Population and Development

#### Fiftieth session

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda<sup>1</sup>

**General Debate 3 (a): Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels**

**3 (b): Special theme of the fiftieth session<sup>2</sup> of the Commission based on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation**

### **Statement submitted by Equidad de Género: Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia A.C., a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council<sup>3</sup>**

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.

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<sup>1</sup> [E/CN.9/2017/1](#).

<sup>2</sup> Changing population age structures and sustainable development.

<sup>3</sup> The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### **The axis for the new sustainable development agenda: Cairo**

The commitments assumed by countries under the Conference of Population and Development should be the axis for the new sustainable development agenda. It is clear that it is the only platform stating how to guarantee the human rights of specific groups of the population in a sustainable development framework. The human rights framework is the only mechanism we have to promote a fair and just transition towards a better world while ensuring the needs and interests of all. Under the Cairo umbrella new rights have been recognized and defined in the past years at the regional level, such as sexual rights and the right to care, under the Latin America and the Caribbean Conference on Population and Development in the Brasilia and Montevideo Consensuses. This is an important step to ensure all measures will be undertaken to guarantee a higher standard of human rights for all persons while facing the current challenges. As will be shown below, every commitment in every sector needs to abide by the human rights framework in a differentiated way while taking into consideration their needs and interests, as it has been stated in Cairo and its subsequent reviews.

While the ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is high, most people in the world are still facing a lack of access to the minimum elements to live a life with dignity: health; education; healthy food; a clean environment; spare time for culture, sport and leisure; equality and a world free of discrimination; among others. In addition, the world is heading towards a major challenge due to the shift of the population pyramid. UNDESA in 2015 showed how by 2050 the number older persons aged 60 and above will equal the number of children under the age of 15. By 2050, all regions with the exception of Africa will have a quarter of their population aged 60 or over. While, in the years to come, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia will predominantly face the challenges of ensuring fulfilling the human rights of its young population, which make up between 19 and 27 per cent of the total population. A so called “demographic dividend” does not bear in mind the human rights of these young people, as we can see in a closer look at the situation they face in the labour market. According to some sources, 37.7 per cent of young workers live in extreme or moderate poverty in 2016, as opposed to the 26 per cent of adult workers in the same situation. Women are at a greater disadvantage than men, as 53.9 per cent of young male workers take part in the formal labour force in comparison to 37.7 per cent of young female workers, with a 16.6 per cent disparity. These statistics show that it is essential to promote differentiated measures in accordance to the specific needs of the diverse population groups that compose our society.

The solution lies in the very same challenge that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development poses to developed and developing countries alike: to promote a coherent implementation in which the social, economic and environmental dimensions go hand in hand. No gain will be made without the promotion of cross-sectorial and cross-institutional articulations. Breaking the silos is still the biggest challenge we face today.

Age is a cross-cutting issue that needs to be taken into consideration not only in matters of health, education and work, but also in the design of sustainable cities and human settlements, in infrastructure, transport, and every concept of space. Understanding how age impacts inclusion and accessibility will transform the way in which our societies are conceived. Access is crucial, but measures should go beyond that to include every age group in a notion of governance that comprises management and decision-making. This means that we need a wider interpretation of human rights so that young people, who are under the age limit for the legal recognition of citizenship within electoral frameworks, are included in planning and implementation of space use towards a new paradigm of sustainable development. Younger generations are aware of the environmental crises we are facing globally, and understand completely that they will suffer the impacts. Their voice must shape the decisions made today.

It is indeed evident that societies, especially youth, face huge challenges. Latin America and the Caribbean, for instance, are dealing with a chronic problem related to organized crime and the illegal trafficking of people, narcotics, guns and organs. The youth population are trapped in the middle of these challenges with no immediate solutions.. Therefore Goal 16 proposes a fundamental set of measures, but will only be successful if they are implemented using the pathway developed under Cairo: every population group has different problems and needs, and their human rights require a differentiated approach.

Different stages of human life require specific approaches to care. Children, youth, the elder population, people with disabilities and chronic illness all need differentiated levels and types of care, but also will require constant care. The right to care implies that the state, the private sector, communities, families, men and women, will all share and redistribute care and unpaid domestic work. Women should not be made to assume the full task of care, because that would mean to oppose subjects of rights. This refers not only to a social pact, but also to a new spatial pact for planning and infrastructure. Therefore, more than ever people of all ages and walks of life should be taken into consideration for the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda, with gender equality as a defining principle that crosscuts all other human conditions.

All the examples above show that the Programme of Action of the Cairo conference is more relevant now than ever. However, thinking forward we need to promote new language in accordance to the recent challenges. Pending issues are still on the agenda and in order for the Programme of Action to continue as a pioneer in promoting the linkages between population rights, it needs to address the pending issues: sexual rights at the global level, including the de-criminalization of abortion, are still demands that will drive us through the paradigm shift that is needed.

The Cairo conference has taken us this far. We need it to take us further. Only with its comprehensive notion of human life and its inherent processes, we will find a fair and just transition towards the healthy planet we need and a life with wellbeing and safety for all.