



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on Population and Development

#### Forty-ninth session

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda<sup>1</sup>

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

#### **Statement submitted by Population Media Center Inc., a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council<sup>2</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.9/2016/1.

<sup>2</sup> The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Population Media Center is a non-profit, international non-governmental organization, with 17 years of field experience producing behaviour change communications programming. Specifically, we specialize in entertainment-education serial dramas, as promoted by section 11.23 of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, which states in part: “Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector should make greater and more effective use of the entertainment media, including radio and television soap operas and drama, folk theatre and other traditional media to encourage public discussion of important but sometimes sensitive topics related to the implementation of the present Programme of Action.” Since 1998 our programming has impacted an estimated 500 million people in over 50 countries.

Population Media Center strongly supports efforts by the Commission on Population and Development to strengthen the demographic evidence base to help achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. International, national and sub-national demographic measures such as population size, rates of population growth or decrease, age structures, incomes, contraceptive prevalence rate, and disease burdens will be crucial to a fully informed effort to fulfil the 2030 Agenda.

We also remind the Commission on Population and Development of target 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals: “By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes”.

With this target in mind, we urge the Commission on Population and Development to strengthen the evidence base related to non-use of contraception by women that have an unmet need for family planning, as defined by the United Nations. Specifically, the international community needs a fuller understanding of the reasons for non-use of contraception commonly cited by women with an unmet need for family planning.

While measures of the availability, or lack thereof, of physical contraceptive commodities is important, a fuller understanding and appreciation of other commonly cited reasons for non-use is crucial. It is Population Media Center’s experience that there is a widespread view among many sexual and reproductive health and rights advocates that lack of access to family planning medical services and commodities is the only major barrier to improved uptake of family planning.

However, we suggest that the Commission on Population and Development should help Member States and civil society organizations more fully understand the cultural and informational reasons for non-use, such as: male opposition to contraception, fear of side effects, and religious prohibitions. These reasons often dwarf lack of access as reasons given for non-use in national Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), as commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development.

Population Media Center is not suggesting that the level of effort in providing contraceptive services and commodities be reduced. It is our belief that high quality, low cost reproductive health care services are an essential element of fertility planning. Both quality and quantity of contraceptive choices and services are in dire

need of improvement throughout much of the world. But access to family planning methods is not sufficient if men prevent their partners from using them, if women don't understand the relative safety of contraception compared with early and repeated childbearing throughout their reproductive years, or if women feel they cannot take control of their own lives.

For these reasons, we reiterate our strong support for efforts by the Commission on Population and Development to strengthen the demographic evidence base to help achieve the 2030 Agenda. Specifically, the fulfilment of target 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals will require strengthened and sustained research, analysis, and dissemination of findings around the topics of cultural and informational reasons for non-use of contraception by women that have an unmet need for family planning, as defined by the United Nations.

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