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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 International Planned Parenthood Federation, 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

A) About IPPF

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) welcomes the priority theme of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on Population and Development.

As a leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights and a global service provider, IPPF works through 163 member associations and collaborating partners in 170 countries to empower the most vulnerable women, men and young people to access life-saving services and programmes, and to live with dignity. We have had general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 1973 ([E/2010/INF/4](#)).

B) Sexual and reproductive health and rights and sustainable development

Sexual and reproductive health and rights — and population dynamics and outcomes — underpin every aspect of sustainable development and economic growth. Over 20 years ago, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) recognized the essential interconnection between the two, but we have yet to implement robust policies and programmes that reflect and address this connection. The ICPD states that “To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, Governments should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies” (para 3.9). Similarly, it reflects the global consensus that “persistent widespread poverty as well as serious social and gender inequities have significant influences on, and are in turn influenced by, demographic parameters such as population growth, structure and distribution” (para 3.1).

This link between sexual and reproductive rights and health and sustainable development result in it being one of the priority interventions in the Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. When individuals can control their sexual choices and choices about reproduction, and be safe and healthy in their sexual and reproductive lives, they are better able to participate in education and the labour market, to care for their families, and have more capacity to contribute to their communities and social life.

Women are more likely to be educated and meaningfully employed when they have more power over how, with whom and when they have sex, greater decision-making in relationships and control over their own reproduction. When women can realize their choices to delay, limit or space their births, they spend less time pregnant and caring for young children and can therefore spend more time in training or education. Pregnancy and complications related to childbirth remain the leading causes of mortality and disability among women of reproductive age in developing countries.

The aggregate effects of good sexual and reproductive health and rights influence the success and sustainability of social development and economic growth. Empowered citizens, population size, density and growth rates have a major impact on production, consumption, employment, income distribution, poverty, social protections and pensions, as well as environmental degradation, and realizing the demographic dividend is key strategy to realize these positive benefits.

C) Delivering the demographic dividend

By investing in children and young people, and implementing regulations to ensure good governance and market structures, governments can develop a well-educated, healthy workforce and a market environment that can offer attractive employment opportunities and financial security. Population age structures in many developing countries offer a time-limited window of opportunity to achieve a demographic dividend — the window of opportunity that opens up as fertility rates decline, when faster rates of economic growth and human development are possible when combined with effective policies and supportive environments. In many low-income countries, children and young people (under 15 years of age) represent more than 40 per cent of the population and depend on financial support from working age adults. As these cohorts (population groups) enter working age and join the labour force, the country's dependency ratio — that is, the proportion of non-working age people to working age people — will decline.

Taken together, governments can help facilitate social and economic dividends from the shifting population age distribution. Research in South Asia found that the demographic dividend contributed 0.79 per cent of the 1.88 per cent annual economic growth in the mid-2000s, and these economic benefits have been sustained over time. However, this opportunity is time-bound and it is not automatic. In general, today's young people want to have fewer children than their parents' generation. This higher demand for family planning services, combined with a larger generation of people of reproductive age, means that sexual and reproductive health services will have to expand in order to ensure that young people can access contraception and other related services and information. It is only with access to these services, as part of a wider package of social support, financial security and enabling markets, that governments can promote future social and economic gains.

Sexual and reproductive health services are one of the most critical services needed to manage population growth, to complete the demographic transition and to achieve a demographic dividend. If comprehensive family planning services are not widely available, the population will continue to grow rapidly and the burden of a youthful population will be magnified several times over. Equally as grave, where unmet need for contraception exists — including comprehensive information about contraception and a choice of affordable, high quality contraceptive methods — governments are denying individuals their internationally agreed human rights to determine if, when and how many children to have.

D) Demographic evidence and identifying population trends

An essential step to realizing the demographic dividend is having adequate data and evidence on demographic and population trends. This enables countries and regions to understand how their population dynamics are changing, where and

which services are needed, and how to best harness the potential of the youth cohort.

As the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights is central to shifting population trends, the measurement of these services and outcomes is paramount to strengthening demographic evidence and identifying population trends. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a globally supported framework to undertake this data collection, through the indicators for targets 3.7 (on universal access to sexual and reproductive health) and 5.6 (on universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights).

In order to adequately track both access to these essential services and the realization of these rights, as well as to give countries access to the data that they will require to enable them to benefit from the demographic dividend, the indicators for the 2030 Agenda should cover process indicators such as the availability of key services and the legal frameworks that govern access to sexual and reproductive health services, and outcome indicators such as met need for family planning, and independence and empowerment in decision making.

The 2030 Agenda is a universal, globally supported mechanism through which to gather robust and disaggregated data; using this mechanism to collect data that would support countries through their demographic transitions would ensure that the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda are being met, while also ensuring that governments have the data necessary to enable them to plan effectively.

Suggested indicators for the sexual and reproductive health and rights targets of the 2030 Agenda are as follows:

Target 3.7: Percentage of women of reproductive age (15-49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods;

Target 3.7: Adolescent birth rate (10-14; 15-19) per 1,000 women in that age group;

Target 5.6: Proportion of women (aged 15-49) who make their own sexual and reproductive decisions, based on the following questions: (a) whether they are able to reject unwanted sexual relations; (b) to make decisions about contraception; and (c) to access sexual and reproductive health care for herself; and

Target 5.6: Proportion (per cent) of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee all women and adolescents access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education.

E) Recommendations

In order to benefit from changing demographic structures and to fully realise the essential role that population plays in achieving sustainable development, the International Planned Parenthood Federation makes the following recommendations:

- Governments should put into place funded national strategies and plans to implement the 2030 Agenda targets on sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality, both to ensure that the human rights of women and girls is achieved, as well as to align to the 2030 Agenda;

- Governments should prioritize, support and advocate for strong indicators to measure the targets of the 2030 Agenda, including the disaggregation of all data by sex, race, income, age and other relevant characteristics;
 - Donor governments should fund and provide technical assistance to countries to increase their data collection capacity and systems, and recipient governments should build on their Millennium Development Goals data collection experiences to expand data collection for the new Agenda;
 - Government policies and funding for public health, including sexual and reproductive health, education and the labour market should be informed by long-term population structures to ensure people's needs are supported through the creation of an evidence-based enabling environment;
 - Governments should undertake proactive steps to address the economic, social, cultural, political, legal and geographic barriers that limit access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially with respect to young people and marginalized communities.
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