



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 January 2023

English only

Commission on Population and Development

Fifty-sixth session

10–14 April 2023

Population, education and sustainable development

Statement submitted by Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council¹

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 The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The special theme of the fifty-sixth session, Population, education and sustainable development, is closely related to Chapter XI of the Programme of Action adopted by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and to Sustainable Development Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. These documents indicate, among others, that to be most effective, education about population issues must begin in primary school and continue through all levels of formal and non-formal education, taking into account the rights and responsibilities of parents and the needs of children and teenagers. Where such programs already exist, curricula should be reviewed, updated and broadened with a view to ensuring adequate coverage of such important concerns as gender sensitivity, reproductive choices and responsibilities, and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. To ensure acceptance of population education programs by the community, population education projects should focus on the issue of population, reproductive choices and responsibilities.

It should be noted that the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, 5–13 September 1994, is a breakthrough event from the point of view of the concept of reproductive and sexual rights, and on many levels. Firstly, it marks the first time that the terms reproductive health, sexual health and reproductive rights are used in the official international discourse. Secondly, these concepts are being conceptualized and defined for the first time. Thirdly, during the deliberations on the final document crowning the Conference, for the first time, feminist circles came to the fore so strongly, which from then on became the main force promoting these concepts. From now on, the dispute between these circles and countries and organizations defending traditional values, including, above all, unborn life, will grow stronger. The gender perspective has also been included in the debate on human fertility, according to which discrimination against women is structural and also manifests itself in unequal relations of production and reproduction.

Ideological disputes around the document meant that women's needs in the field of motherhood, perinatal care or the fight against infertility were not emphasized enough. An example of this is the indication of unsafe abortion as the main threat to the health and life of women, although for a much larger part of them, childbirth and puerperium are real experiences that they have to face. Perinatal mortality, numerous health complications affecting women after childbirth, too high rates of cesarean sections and other unnecessary medical interventions are problems that have not been fully resolved to this day, although it has been almost 25 years since the Cairo Conference. Therefore, reproductive and sexual health has been reduced to a large extent to the issue of fertility control, which proves the strong ideologization of these concepts. They are strongly individualistic, using concepts promoted by feminist circles. Despite the strong resistance of the Holy See and allied countries against this understanding of human sexuality and reproduction, the Conference created the ground to promote abortion internationally by introducing the term “safe abortion” and including legal abortion in reproductive health services.

Referring to education in the field of sex education, it should be pointed out that sex education has been a subject taught in Polish schools for many years. It is non-compulsory, but any student whose parents do not declare that they give up their child's participation in these classes has access to them. These lessons are called “education for family life” and provide type A sexual education. This means that the content presented in the education for family life lessons relates to the physiological aspects of human sexuality and is no less comprehensive than the content contained in other, often controversial sex education programs, such as the standards of sex

education of the World Health Organization. Type A classes that are conducted in Poland are supported by the presentation of the relational nature of human sexuality, and their task is to educate children and adolescents to love and responsibility. Meanwhile, type C sex education programs proposed by World Health Organization promote a different, extremely permissive vision of this sphere of human life.

Type C sex education is much less effective than type A education currently used in Poland. Assumptions of the sex education program, such as preventing teenage pregnancies, reducing the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, delaying the age of sexual initiation or reducing the number of sexual offenses are not met in countries that have adopted the C sexuality education model. According to the data in Poland, the average age of sexual initiation is almost two years higher than in Germany or Sweden. Hepatitis C newly detected cases per 100,000 amounted to 9.3 in Poland, and 18.5 in Sweden in 2014. In the area of sexual crimes, it should be noted that the rate of such crimes, including rape, per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017 amounted to approximately 8 in Poland, 42 in Germany, 83 in Denmark and 189 in Sweden. Bearing in mind the above, it should be stated that Poland can be a positive example of how type A sexuality education has positive effects in the above-mentioned areas.

To summarize, both educational and population issues and the promotion of sustainable development should be based on the science of biology, responsibility and morality, which coherently connect all the topics discussed. Poland is an example of a country that implements the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda in a way that is detached from ideological concepts and supports both education as well as reproductive rights and health —allocating appropriate funds for prenatal care of the mother and child, as well as diagnostics and health protection of mothers and young children.
