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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 Stichting Rutgers WPF and Advocates for Youth, African Women’s Development & Communication Network (FEMNET), Awaz Centre for Development Services, Center for Health and Gender Equity, Inc., Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung — German Foundation for World Population, Family Care International, Family Health Association of Iran, Federation for Women and Family Planning, Forum for Women and Development — FOKUS, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Italian Association for Women in Development, New Zealand Family Planning Association, Inc., Public Health Institute, Women for Women’s Human Rights — New Ways, Women’s Global Network for Reproductive Rights, Stichting dance4life, 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

Stichting Rutgers WPF and the undersigned organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, non-governmental organizations promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights worldwide, welcome the theme of the forty-ninth session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development “Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda”, and the review of the future organization and methods of work of the Commission on Population and Development.

Demographic changes and more broadly population dynamics have a significant impact on realizing the Programme of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) as well as the Sustainable Development Goals and targets committed to in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. Today, we see the largest cohort of young people in history; increasing numbers of people are on the move as a result of climate change, instability and conflict; and despite reducing global fertility rates, the world population continues to increase, adding an extra billion faster than ever. These trends will each have a profound influence on any steps taken in the implementation of the ICPD agenda and the 2030 Agenda, and in particular efforts to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality within and between countries. Those steps need to therefore have human rights, and more specifically sexual and reproductive health and rights, at their basis. The fulfilment of these rights is a precondition and will determine whether governments and other duty bearers will be successful in realizing their promises to achieve sustainable development.

Unfortunately, human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights are violated every day. It is highly alarming that today we still see that 225 million people would like to use contraceptives but do not have access to them; women and girls die or become disabled due to pregnancy or child birth; and millions of (young) women each year resort to unsafe and illegal abortions. Too little is invested and too many social, economic, legal, cultural and religious barriers remain to ensure everyone has access to the contraceptives of their choice; to sexual and reproductive health information and education, including comprehensive sexuality education; and to the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health services, including safe and legal abortion. Too little is done to fight the root causes of gender-based and sexual violence, and harmful practices such as female genital cutting and early and forced marriages. Especially for vulnerable groups, including women and girls, people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, young people and adolescents, migrants and refugees, people living with HIV/AIDS and people living with disabilities, these social, economic, legal, cultural and religious barriers remain insurmountable.

Realizing the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights for all, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, will determine whether people can make informed decisions about their lives, for instance about if, when and how many children they would like to have, and to remain healthy with the informed choices they make. It determines whether people can be free from violence and discrimination, and live fulfilling and productive lives. These rights are essential for the realization of gender equality and fulfilment of the rights of women and girls, which are goals in themselves and fundamentally linked to economic, social and

environmental development: and hence crosscut all Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

Demographic evidence and identifying population trends are key in the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and merit a profound discussion on indicators. How do we measure demographic changes, and their underlying factors? In order to meaningfully interpret demographic evidence, it is key to measure improvements in sexual and reproductive health and rights. Indicators need to measure individual choices, access to and quality of services, information and education, and legal, financial and policy aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights that determine whether rights are actually respected, protected and fulfilled. The number of global indicators for the 2030 Agenda should not be restricted a priori but indicators need to be based on the spirit of all the goals and targets. The targets related to sexual and reproductive health and rights each require their particular indicators at global, regional and national level to ensure commitment is translated to action. All indicators need to be disaggregated on the basis of at least age, gender, income and location (rural/urban) to be able to identify and counter inequality and discrimination at its core. Moreover, all indicators need to be measured by all countries. Only through a comprehensive indicator framework measured by all countries, the demographic evidence base can be strengthened and allow for meaningful monitoring, review and accountability of the ICPD agenda and the 2030 Agenda.

Strengthening the demographic evidence base, including the adoption of strong indicators measuring progress in the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights, is crucial to ensure a meaningful debate, learning and identification of gaps and successes in the implementation of the ICPD agenda and the 2030 Agenda. The annual sessions of the Commission on Population and Development need to have more space for the sharing of the national, regional and global gains, lessons learned and challenges in implementation; while maintaining the political commitment through continued annual informal consultations of an outcome document. Review of the future organization and methods of work of the Commission should accommodate these needs by inviting governments and its relevant ministers to share their success stories and challenges on the road of implementation, and allowing civil society to contribute to the discussions from their perspectives. Multi-stakeholder dialogues are important tools in that. National involvement in the Commission on Population and Development should be strengthened by including a ministerial segment and maintaining the annual informal consultations of an outcome document on the main theme of the Commission.

While acknowledging the strong connection between the Commission on Population and Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Commission has to keep its primary focus on the follow up and review of the ICPD Programme of Action and the outcomes of its follow-up and review conferences. However, the Commission should inform the discussions at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in various ways, for instance through its outcome document and by allowing the chair of the Bureau to take part in the High-Level Political Forum. In both the Commission and the Forum, the contributions from civil society actors need to be more strongly accommodated as they can meaningfully contribute to the follow up and review of the ICPD agenda and the 2030 Agenda.

The following commitments are required to strengthen the demographic evidence base for the 2030 Agenda:

- Recognize the interlinkages between population dynamics, human rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights and all three pillars of sustainable development;
- Include rights-based indicators measuring sexual and reproductive health and rights that measure individual choices, access to and quality of services, information and education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and the legal, financial and policy aspects. Ensure all indicators are disaggregated, at a minimum on the basis of age, gender, income and location (rural/urban);
- Create space for debate and exchange of lessons learned, success stories, identification of challenges and gaps concerning the implementation of the ICPD agenda and the 2030 Agenda at the Commission on Population and Development and in the review of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Maintain political commitment to the Commission on Population and Development by maintaining annual informal consultations on the special theme;
- Ensure a strong linkage between the annual Commission on Population and Development and the review of the 2030 Agenda at the High-level Political Forum, while remaining the main mandate of the Commission (to follow up and review the ICPD Programme of Action and the outcomes of its follow up and review conferences) intact;
- Ensure that civil society actors participate in the annual sessions of the Commission on Population and Development, including the informal consultations and multi-stakeholder panels, and of the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

Note that in this statement, when referring to the ‘ICPD agenda’, this includes the content the ICPD Programme of Action; the outcomes of review conferences; the “Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014”; the “Recurrent themes and key elements identified during the sessions of the Commission on Population and Development” – i.e. Index Report; and the report of the Commission on Population and Development on its forty-seventh session