



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza  
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations  
at the General Assembly Debate  
on the follow-up of the Program of Action of the  
International Conference on Population and Development  
New York, 9 October 2014

Mr. President,

My delegation welcomes the convening of the 29<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 on 22 September last.

The Holy See is aware of the many challenges that the international community still faces, in order to achieve the goal of greater, sustained economic and social development for all. Thus, while noting that good progress has been made in the last 20 years in the reduction of the number of people living in extreme poverty, the Holy See remains deeply concerned that 1.2 billion people still live in extreme poverty.

My delegation is convinced that the world's poor deserve and expect even greater results. Thus, we should refuse to be satisfied with the current results and press forward to consolidate the gains and achieve even more in favor of those left behind. Lifting them out of extreme poverty is the best guarantee for them to enjoy their basic rights and dignity.

My delegation wishes to recall that the ICPD Program of Action asked States to promote and strengthen the family as a vital element toward producing greater social and economic development. Governments and the international community were called upon to give greater attention to, and manifest greater solidarity with, poor families and those who have become victims of war, drought, famine, natural disasters and discrimination or violence. No effort should be spared to keep their members together, to reunite them in case of separation and to ensure access to programs designed to support and assist those vulnerable.

While individuals and peoples have been on the move since time immemorial, migration has become truly a phenomenon of our times. Yet, more often than not, policy makers and large segments of society see migration only in a negative light. Negative stereotypes of migrants are used to promote policies detrimental to their rights and dignity. Moreover, migrants are often victims of trafficking, especially children and women. These are issues that demand our attention when tackling problems about population and development. There must be a way to stop this tragedy. And we must find it.

The ICPD recognizes that universal access to quality education is the most effective means for promoting sustainable economic, social and political development. It also goes without saying that access to education for women and girls at all levels is at the heart of empowering women within society and promoting equality between men and women.

Together with education, health is a pillar for real development. Healthcare institutions of the Catholic Church throughout the world remain committed to ensuring the right to equal, effective and morally responsible health care for all.

However the Holy See notes that too often, the role of the ICPD on maternal health is used to promote “reproductive health rights” detrimental to the unborn human life and the integral needs of women themselves.

Efforts to address maternal mortality, obstetric fistula, child mortality, prenatal and antenatal care, sexually transmitted diseases and other health matters are at times hampered by policies that fail to take into account the right to life of the unborn child. Suggesting that reproductive health includes a “right to abortion” explicitly violates the language of the ICPD, oftentimes defies moral and legal standards within local communities, and divides efforts to address the real needs of mothers and children.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, the Holy See is convinced that all efforts to respond to the integral needs of communities entail taking into account the social, cultural and spiritual needs of all, adhering to the international standard set in the ICPD, which calls for national laws to be fully respected.

Thank you, Mr. President.