

Dear Madam Chair,
Distinguished Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Belgium aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union.

Let me first of all congratulate my compatriot, Ambassador Bénédicte Frankinet, for taking up the chair of this year's Commission on Population and Development. As we all know, the outcome of this session will be important for the Post-2015 exercise.

Therefore, I hope that the entire UN membership will reaffirm its commitment to the implementation of the ICPD so that these principles can be integrated in the Post-2015 framework. **Population issues are at the heart of the Post-2015 Agenda.** If we want to achieve the sustainable development goals we need to take into account contrasting population dynamics. Governments have the responsibility to integrate these population dynamics in planning their policies.

We need to ensure that no-one is left behind: **everyone counts.** Continuing inequalities must be lifted. All sorts of discriminations continue to prevail: discrimination or violence based upon gender, sexual orientation, disabilities or age. These hinder the enjoyment of human rights for all as well as the full implementation of the ICPD.

I know it is a commonplace, but in this forum it needs to be repeated: more than half of the global population are women. And yet, everywhere in the world women are fighting for their rights, rights that are key to human development. A woman's right to education. A girl's right not to be forced into marriage. A young woman's right to decide freely and responsibly over her sexual and reproductive health.

Young people need access to information to make informed choices and decisions. In Belgium comprehensive sexuality education is part of school curricula. Knowledge is essential for young people to enjoy their sexuality – physically and emotionally, individually and in relationships. Furthermore, we have made contraceptives for young people free and established over-the-counter access to emergency contraceptives. As a result, Belgium has one of the lowest rates of teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality in the world.

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