

Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Florence Blondel, representing Population Matters, Population Connection, and Population Media Center.

The 1994 Cairo Programme of Action was clear on the benefits of slowing population growth and the urgent need to empower all women and girls, yet the world has failed them. Almost half of partnered women in low- and mid-income countries still have no decision-making power over their own bodies, while one-in-five girls today is married before she turns 18, gender-based violence still affects one-in-three women globally, and 257 million women have an unmet need for modern contraception.

While we've seen important progress in reducing the proportion of women affected by some of these injustices, in many cases, the total number of affected women is still growing due to population growth outstripping development efforts.

International funding for reproductive health and rights sadly falls far short of what is needed. This is a tragedy, both because it is a moral failing and because investing in women and girls is key to advancing all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As noted in the Report of the Secretary-General, "the continuing high levels of fertility that drive rapid population growth in many low- and lower-middle-income countries are both a cause and a symptom of slow progress in development." Drawing the links between population, health, environment, and poverty is key to demonstrating the unmatched power of women's empowerment.

As noted by Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro, former CEO of the Global Fund for Women,

*"When we leave the P out of the ICPD, we cannot achieve the goals of the ICPD..."*

Our three organizations would like to see a recommitment to the Programme of Action and Agenda 2030 that embraces the critical linkages between population and the SDGs, and that emphasizes the crucial importance of investing in women and girls.

We stand ready to collaborate with the UN and other stakeholders on these issues.

Thank you for your consideration.