

Regional Conference on International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

“Population and Development: Ensuring Rights and Choices”

Closing remarks

Tatiana Molcean, Executive Secretary, UNECE

Friday 20 October 2023, 17:15, Room XVIII

Your Excellencies,
UNFPA Deputy Executive Director Diene Keita,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues and friends,

We have come together this week—at a critical time for our region—to reflect on our progress towards the ambitious vision set out in the ICPD Programme of Action.

And there are many achievements to acknowledge. People in the UNECE region are living longer, healthier lives. Participation in education and training across the life course is increasing, more older persons are active in the labour market, women are increasingly represented in national parliaments and leadership positions, and gender gaps in employment and pay are narrowing.

In many areas, however, progress is less apparent. Multiple and intersecting inequalities, traditional gender norms, and various forms of discrimination continue to prevent individuals and societies from fulfilling their potential. Recent challenges

in the region have threatened gains, exacerbated these inequalities, and generated new ones.

As the region continues to face rapid demographic change, now is the time to renew the commitment to ensuring **every** individual can exercise their rights and freely make choices that allow them to realize their full potential. In the UNECE region, where population ageing and population decline **are** the new realities, adapting to demographic change means finding new ways to support individual needs and aspirations across the life course.

Over the last two days, we have heard about some of these needs and aspirations directly from young people and civil society. Dozens of member States have shared responses to both long-standing and emerging population and development issues. From expanded parental leave and family friendly workplaces, to preventative healthcare in schools, free access to family planning services for young people, and integrated systems of maternal and postpartum care, to name just a few, these approaches chart the path towards making the ICPD vision a reality. As we go forward from here, we need to continue to work together, across countries, sectors, and all levels of government, seeking to include many voices, and to learn from one another.

Joining several delegates and speakers who raised this issue during their interventions, I'd like to stress the role of reliable data and statistics in achieving the ICPD and 2030 agendas—to understand the population dynamics of our countries, to identify who is being left behind, and to develop effective policy solutions. The regional review on ICPD and recent regional assessments of progress towards the SDGs have highlighted the need for enhanced data collection and dissemination. Data on older persons and children and youth are particularly limited, as are disaggregated data that support the analysis of intersecting disadvantages.

UNECE continues to support member States in developing reliable national statistics in priority areas for ICPD such as social and demographic statistics on migration, poverty, paid and unpaid work, gender, and ageing. And we are very pleased to continue our collaboration with partners at the Generation and Gender Programme. The new round of Generation and Gender Surveys launched in 2020 provide valuable data on recent trends around family formation, fertility decisions and gender equality in several member States.

As we come to the end of the conference, allow me to express my gratitude to the many people who contributed to make it a success.

Thank you to our distinguished delegates, representatives of civil society and academia, and to our youth representatives for actively and enthusiastically sharing your experiences and perspectives.

Thank you to our co-chairs, H.E. Mr. Alexei Buzu, Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Republic of Moldova and H.E. Ambassador Aurora Diaz-Rato Revuelta, Permanent Representative of Spain to United Nations in Geneva who succeeded in the difficult task of guiding us through a rich but very full programme.

Thank you to our excellent panellists and rapporteurs, who shaped the important discussions over the last two days.

I'd like to also acknowledge our interpreters and colleagues from conference services for ensuring a smooth and successful meeting.

I would like to extend a special thank you to UNFPA Deputy Executive Director Diene Keita, UNFPA Regional Director Florence Bauer, and the entire UNFPA team for the continued collaboration in the follow-up and review of ICPD in our region.

Last but not least, I'd like to thank my colleagues in our UNECE Population Unit for their hard work during the last months on the regional review and to prepare this conference.

Distinguished delegates, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of ICPD, let's renew our collective commitment to the programme of action, working to realize the potential of individuals and societies and secure the human rights of everyone in the UNECE region.

Thank you.