



Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration

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Information Note

I. BACKGROUND

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its groundbreaking Programme of Action (PoA) adopted in 1994 marked a global consensus on putting people at the heart of development, and integrated population issues in the global development discourse. It recognized the interdependence of population, development and the environment, and introduced a new measurement for progress: the extent to which political, social and economic inequalities are addressed. The ICPD identified key areas including gender equality, family structures and roles, population growth, reproductive health and rights, urbanization, and migration. It also shed light on the specific needs of population groups in light of demographic transitions and age structural changes.

The validity of this global consensus was supported by the evidence presented in the operational review, mandated by the General Assembly in resolution 65/234. Over the span of 20 years (1990-2010), the number of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries decreased by half as a share of the total population in developing countries, a reduction of almost 700 million people. Most of the countries achieved gender parity in primary education, maternal mortality decreased by 47 per cent, and the global fertility rate decreased by 23 per cent.¹ Despite significant achievements, the progress had been unequal across and within countries and regions, and new challenges and realities emerged: wealth inequality remains prevalent, diverse demographic trends have surfaced including ageing, gender equality is far from achieved, climate change threatens the sustainability and livelihoods of people across the globe, and the world has witnessed unprecedented levels of urbanization and migration.

On the twentieth anniversary of the ICPD PoA, the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 resulted in extending the timeline of the PoA to ensure that the ICPD goals are met and new challenges are addressed. It reaffirmed that the fulfilment of human rights and dignity is a necessary precondition for meeting the ICPD goals; touched upon the different dimensions of well-being across the life cycle; and further emphasized the interlinkages and dependency of population and sustainable development.

In the Arab region, the 20th year review of ICPD was led by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA), in close partnership with the League of Arab States (LAS) and in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). A regional ministerial conference was organized by LAS, ESCWA, and UNFPA, in collaboration with ECA, on 24-26 June 2013, under the theme "Development Challenges and Population Dynamics in a Changing Arab World". The conference resulted in the adoption of the Cairo Declaration, a statement that renewed the commitment of Member States to the PoA as an unfinished agenda on population and development to guide Arab countries' efforts beyond

¹ Framework of Actions for the Follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference of Population and Development Beyond 2014. United Nations. Available at: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ICPD_beyond2014_EN.pdf

2014. It highlighted several priority areas for the Arab region including gender equality and women's empowerment, youth, sexual and reproductive health, international migration, internal displacement and large refugee movements, and environmental sustainability.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted unanimously by 193 UN member States in September 2015, represents the most ambitious global development agenda to date. It calls for an all-of-society and all-of-government approach to address the interdependent social, economic and environmental dimensions of development. The overarching nature of the 2030 Agenda incorporates the premises and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action in the broader rights based, all-inclusive and sustainable concept of human development. Common areas include education, inclusive economic development, equality, health, women empowerment, and key priorities of different sociodemographic groups including youth, migrants, older persons, and persons with disability. Both frameworks also highlighted the importance of high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data to achieve progress towards the set goals and objectives.

Recognizing the need to foster the synergy between ICPD Beyond 2014 and the 2030 Agenda to ensure the optimal investment of States' efforts and resources, and to guarantee the effective contribution of ICPD Beyond 2014 to the achievement of the SDGs, the 49th session of the Commission on Population and Development (11-15 April 2016) resulted in the adoption of Res E/2016/25, which affirmed the Commission's commitment to contribute to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Efforts are underway to sequence and synchronize the ICPD Beyond 2014 review cycle with the four-year cycle of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

The year 2019 marks the 25th anniversary of the Cairo Declaration of 1994 and five years into the implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration as the Arab region's framework on population and development. A review of the progress achieved is a critical step to assessing where the region stands and identifying existing challenges and emerging issues, particularly as Arab countries further engage in aligning their development strategies with the 2030 Agenda.

II. Regional Review Conference on 2013 Cairo Declaration on Population and Development

A. Thematic Focus

Against this backdrop, and in the context of the mandated five-year review of the 2013 Cairo Declaration, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Population Fund- Arab States Regional Office (UNFPA-ASRO) in cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS), are co-leading the five-year review of the 2013 Cairo Declaration. The findings of this exercise will be consolidated in a regional review report and will feed in the global review of ICPD at 25 years.

A Regional Conference (the Conference) will be organized by the three partner organizations and will serve to review progress since 2013, focusing on linkages and synergies between the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda. The thematic focus is also informed by the theme for the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development "Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", which will seek to further harmonize the review cycle of the two frameworks.

B. Objectives

The Conference will serve to assess the progress and identify the gaps in the implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration across the Arab region, with a focus on the commitments made and the policies and programmes implemented in various population and development areas. It will provide a peer learning platform for States to present their success stories and share their respective challenges. The discussions will be informed by a regional report synthesizing inputs from Arab countries and highlighting major trends and developments witnessed in the region since the last review in 2013.

The Conference will also provide a timely opportunity for participants to examine and assess the linkages and synergies between the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda and its goals and targets. The three-day discussions will also seek to identify priorities and emerging issues for the region. Expert presentations and discussions will hone in on the nexus of population and sustainable development, identify emerging issues and trends, explore means to enhance the integration of population dynamics and issues into development planning, and improve monitoring, assessment, and reporting on the 2013 Cairo Declaration as a tool reflecting the people dimension of the sustainable Development agenda towards addressing and monitoring people-centered SDGs.

C. Participants

In the spirit of the 2030 Agenda, and to ensure an all of government all of society approach to the review, the Conference will bring together representatives of governmental institutions, including ministers and high-level officials from relevant ministries and National Population Councils, in addition to parliamentarians, representatives of civil society organizations, regional organizations, UN agencies, academics, experts, and other stakeholders.

D. Programme

The program of the Conference held over three days, will be divided into three components:

1. 2013 Cairo Declaration: Assessing Progress and Challenges in the Arab Region

To set the scene for the Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration, participants will benefit from an overview of global and regional population trends and prospects. To this end, the key findings of the State of World Population 2018 Report, and the Demographic Profile of the Arab Region highlighting region-specific trends, will be presented.

The draft “*Regional Review Report on Progress in Implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration: Development Challenges and Population Dynamics in a Changing Arab World*” (the Report) will provide a key input to the deliberations. Prepared based on a regional review conducted in 2017-2018 by UNFPA-ASRO, LAS and ESCWA, the Report will seek to: review the regional achievement from institutional and legal perspectives on the implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration; focus on the impact of temporal patterns affecting population issues; analyze common trends across the region; and highlight best practices and challenges faced, and the role of national institutions in the implementation of states commitments.

The Conference will also open the space for peer learning and national ownership of the regional review of the 2013 Cairo Declaration through encouraging the active participation of representatives of Member States and allowing for presentations of national experiences, challenges, priorities and promoting regional cooperation on population issues. Countries that have opted for preparing voluntary review reports will have the opportunity to present key messages from their review highlighting opportunities, success stories, challenges faced and lessons learned. Presentations and national reviews delivered by member States will complement the findings and conclusions of the review and will be included in the finalized the Report.

A high-level plenary session will provide the opportunity for senior policy makers to share their country’s experiences in integrating population priorities in development planning and strategies.

2. Synergies and Interlinkages between the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda

The second component of the conference will focus on enhancing participants’ understanding of the nexus of population and sustainable development through exploring the linkages of the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda and implications for planning and policy making. A plenary session will focus on the converging objectives of the two frameworks towards ensuring sustainable development and the fulfilment of human rights for all; the cross-cutting priorities across the two frameworks; Cairo Declaration 2013 trends and related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators, and the mechanisms for follow up and review using population-related indicators and targets.

Three thematic plenary sessions will then explore in-depth the priority areas highlighted in the Cairo declaration. The first of the three sessions will explore experiences and challenges in ensuring a life of dignity for all while asking what still needs to change for the region to capitalize on its biggest resource for development: its human capital. The second thematic session will be dedicated to assessing the progress achieved ensuring a healthy life for all and sensitizing participants to the positive implications of adopting a life-cycle approach and issues related to providing universal access to health care. The third thematic session will focus on the interconnectedness of mobility and environmental sustainability, highlighting emerging issues related to patterns and trends of population migration, as well emerging drivers of migration including crisis and climate change, and the impact of migration on urban sustainability. These sessions will be enriched by the presentations of technical experts in addition to the different stakeholders involved.

3. Moving Forward: Mobilizing Means of Implementation and Follow-up Mechanisms

The final plenary session will explore ways to enhance means of implementation and follow-up mechanisms to ensure that the next ICPD review, four years from now, showcases tangible progress. Discussions will focus on the role of different stakeholders, including governments, parliaments, and civil society organizations in mobilizing knowledge, capacity and resources to support implementation and enhance accountability and monitoring. The discussion will also focus on regional and global reporting processes and mechanisms related to the 2030 Agenda, such as the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and the High Level Political Forum.

These three agenda components serve as a basis for the conference programme of work. The proposed structure combines member States' presentations and thematic panels aimed to address key population and development issues and engage the audience in a dialogue on key national and regional priorities. The overall objective is to reflect on the ICPD goals that have been clearly articulated in the 2030 Agenda goals and propose actions moving forward to deliver on the commitments of the ICPD PoA as reflected/incorporated in the 2030 Agenda.

E. Outcome

The conference provides a pertinent opportunity to engage member States in a dialogue on 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda, ahead of the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development to be held in 2019. The Conference outcome, in the form of Key Messages, will feed into the CPD 52nd Session, the outcome of which will be submitted to the 2019 HLPF, to be held under the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality” with a focus on SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16, and 17.

F. Documentation

- 29th United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014 ICPD beyond 2014. Available in English from https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ICPD_UNGASS_REPORT_for_website.pdf
- Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014. Report of the Secretary-General. Available in English from https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ICPD_beyond2014_EN.pdf
- Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 27 July 2016. Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on Population and Development. Available in English from: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2016/25
- Resolution 2016/1 Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available in English from <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/pdf/commission/2016/documents/Resolution2.pdf>

- General Assembly resolution 70/1 – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available in English and Arabic from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.
- A/70/684 – Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level. Available in Arabic from www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.60&Lang=A; and in English from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/follow-up>.
- Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Available in English from www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf.
- Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States. Available in Arabic only from www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/ministerial_sessions/docs/escwa_29_11_a_0.pdf