

**Delegation from the Republic of Belarus**  
***Position Paper for the Commission on Population and Development***

The topics before the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) are Fulfilling the Nutritional Needs of the Aging Population, Addressing the Effects of International Migration on Cities, and Realizing SDG 3 by Ensuring Access to Essential Health-Care Services and Education. Recognizing these topics are centralized around the preeminent concept of human rights, the Republic of Belarus is resolved to discuss and address these topics with all Member States.

**I. Fulfilling the Nutritional Needs of the Aging Population**

According to the document *World Population Aging* of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2017, the number of people aged 60 and over worldwide has more than doubled since 1980 and elder persons are expected to outnumber children under the age of 10 in 2030 (1.41 billion versus 1.35 billion). Without stable and continuous nutritional intake, people will be subjected to nutrition-related problems, especially malnutrition which 39% of adults worldwide are suffering from. The risk of malnutrition increases with age, which is a significant cause of potentially preventable morbidity and mortality in those aged 65 years and older. This risk compromises their quality of life, increases their dependency and the need for hospitalization or long-term care. Given these circumstances, it is of great importance to ensure access to adequate nutrition for the elderly. Belarus is dedicated to aiding Member States of the UN in promoting the right to adequate nutrition for the aging population as well as tackling malnutrition.

Having signed and ratified the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), Belarus has expressed its commitment to protecting the right of people to adequate food. In the *Global Strategy on Aging and Health*, WHO provided a four-year action plan for Member States and recommended aligning health systems to the needs of elder populations. Accordingly, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Belarus has set up 146 social centers and 70 homes offering caring services to the elderly. Furthermore, the Visiting Nurses Service, first launched by the Belarus Red Cross Society in 1964, is providing long-term palliative home care including food delivery and daily needs support for the aging population. Additionally, Belarus has been encouraging academic exchanges to foster technical innovation for dealing with malnutrition. In October 2016, the Belarusian Republican Gerontological Public Association held the Republican Scientific and Practical Conference in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, under the theme of "Innovational Methods in Geriatrics". The experts at the conference shared their latest academic research with each other and emphasized the importance of using advanced medical technology in geriatrics.

Since the exact nutritional requirements for the aged remain unclear, Belarus suggests WHO and related research institutions conduct a comprehensive survey on the matter. For the prevention of malnutrition, Belarus advocates the promotion and implementation of the Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST), an effective tool in identifying malnutrition patterns. Noticing the superior accessibility of the nutritional assistance offered by local communities, Belarus puts forward a program named "Community for Ensuring Nutrition of the Aged" (CENA) to all Member States. Belarus proposes that in the program, international organizations such as Nutrition International would cooperate with local governments and organize group activities for alleviating the loneliness of the aged and offer meals to meet their nutritional needs. Registered nutritionists and dietitians from those organizations would hold lectures and information sessions on healthy eating habits, while doctors would offer routine medical assistance on nutrition-related diseases. Sponsors such as grocery retailers could contribute to the program with financial support or nutritional food products.

**II. Addressing the Effects of International Migration on Cities**

As is stated in the report on the 51st session of CPD, international migration has reached an unprecedented level, with most movements taking place between countries in the same geographical region. In 2017, the number of international migrants in Belarus reached 1.1 million, accounting for 11.6% of the national population. International migration, if properly managed, can improve the diversity, social stability and economy in countries of origin, transit, and destination. Particularly, as is reported by the World Bank, the remittances to developing countries grew to US\$528 billion in 2018, which contributes greatly to local economic development. However, the cost of remittances has remained over 7% for years, which is much higher than the 3% goal by 2030 as is set in the SDG target 10.c. Being fully aware of the situation, Belarus is committed to regulating the international migration flow and exerting its positive effects on cities.

Belarus underlines the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and its 1967 Protocol in which basic human rights for refugees are stated. As a country which has been maintaining a positive net migration rate for decades, Belarus values the positive effects of migration and has been consistently pursuing a welcoming socio-economic environment for international migrants. From 2013 to 2015, Belarus cooperated with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in conducting the Strengthening the Migration Management and Readmission in Eastern Europe (MIGRECO) project. During the project, Belarus further developed domestic migration management systems in line with international standards and European Union best practices. Additionally, in 2015, the Belarusian government carried out the National Demographic Security Programme of Belarus (2016-2020) and planned to admit 70,000 new migrants by 2020.

Belarus stresses the sharing of responsibility between countries under the coordination of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the case of large refugee movements. In recent years, redundant procedures and high service charges are still faced by migrant workers when transferring remittances overseas to their families. These institutional factors can drive remittances to informal channels and limit the positive influence they have on the local economy. Therefore, Belarus calls for Member States to simplify the remittance transfer procedures and invest in mobile money-based global remittance systems which can make online transfers more convenient and cheaper. In addition, to improve the integration of migrants into society, it is necessary to carry out targeted policies including language training courses. Cultural events for enhancing mutual understanding between people are also vital in migrant integration as well as cultural diversity improvement. Considering that many countries rely on migrant workers to help them fulfill their labor shortfalls, Belarus advises Member States to carry out policies in favor of international migrant workers with certain technical skills, such as extending their visa validity and reducing state fees for visa application.

### **III. Realizing SDG 3 by Ensuring Access to Essential Health-Care Services and Education**

SDG 3, “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, plays a fundamental role in improving people’s living conditions and building prosperous societies. In GA resolution 71/313 (2017), the global indicator framework for the SDGs highlighted the importance of universal access to reproductive health-care services. Reproductive health problems can be alleviated by reducing maternal mortality and controlling the spread of HIV among people. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that every day, approximately 830 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Furthermore, in 2017, 36.9 million people were living with HIV and 940,000 died from AIDS-related illnesses worldwide. Facing such severe problems, Belarus is committed to protecting individuals’ reproductive rights through strengthening health systems including health-care services and education.

During the past decades, Belarus has made substantial progress in promoting reproductive health domestically. To improve maternal health, monetary allowances have been granted by the government as incentives for women to see doctors within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Currently, the Belarusian government ensures a paid maternity leave lasting an average of 133 days, one of the longest in the world. The above measures have contributed to a significant decline in maternal mortality of 87.9% in Belarus from 1990 to 2015 according to WHO. In order to promote HIV-related knowledge, in 2016, UNESCO collaborated with the Belarusian government to launch the project “An Open Conversation about Sexuality Education & Reproductive Health” in Belarus. So far, over 100 educators and 200 parents have benefited from the workshops and seminars of the project. Meanwhile, a number of students have attended training sessions about sexual health that offer guidance and help to prevent risky behaviors in the future. As a result, in 2016, WHO confirmed the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Belarus. Therefore, mother-to-child transmission of HIV no longer poses a threat to people’s reproductive health in the country.

To improve the accessibility of reproductive health-care services in remote areas, Belarus calls for Member States to ensure convenient transportation to health-care institutions and increase the number of medical personnel in these places. Belarus suggests that Member States include sex education in the educational systems as a means to eliminate sexually transmitted diseases. At the same time, Belarus advises Member States to provide workshops and seminars in local communities for people with no access to educational resources at schools. To better monitor the implementation of sex education in Member States, Belarus proposes a periodic review of its progress by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and WHO.