HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 10TH SESSION OF THE JOINT NGO BRIEFING SERIES

Population and Development

Alessandra Velliucci, Chief, Press and External Relations Section of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, chaired the briefing, which was also attended by Jolanda Groen, Associate Programme Officer, United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, and featured presentations by Alanna Armitage, Director of the United Nations Population Fund, Geneva Office and by Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich, Chief, Population Unit, Statistical Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

United Nations Population Fund

ALANNA ARMITAGE, Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Geneva Office, spoke about the 20 year review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The ICPD was held in Cairo in 1994 and became known as "the Cairo Conference" the outcome of which was a Programme of Action to 2014. Some attendees at today’s meeting had been a part of it. The Cairo Conference was a historic moment for those who worked in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights because it was the first time the international community recognized that population issues and reproductive health were really human rights issues. It launched a human rights perspective on population growth: people no longer spoke of demographic targets, but instead discussed women’s right to family planning and reproductive health services. That was why the Review Process, almost 20 years on, was so exciting.

In 2010 the General Assembly passed a resolution in which it decided to extend the Programme of Action beyond 2014 and ensure its follow-up to fully meet its goals and objectives. The Resolution called upon UNFPA, in consultation with Member States and other stakeholders, to undertake an operational review of the implementation of the Programme of Action, now known as the Beyond 2014 Review and Follow Up Process. The Resolution requested that the Secretary-General submit a report, based on that review, to the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), in March 2014. Following near-completion of a global survey (165 questionnaires had been received) the Beyond 2014 Global Review was now in an analysis phase. Regional Commissions were preparing analysis and reports for the 2013 regional population conferences and the resulting Global Survey Report on trends, conclusions and recommendations stemming from survey results should be available by early May this year. Consultations had already started on how to guide the reports of the Regional Commissions and provide vision for the forward-looking ICPD agenda beyond 2014.

Ms. Armitage spoke about another strand of the review process, the Global Thematic Meetings, which were on the themes of youth, women’s health, and human rights. The first meeting to be held was the Bali Global Youth Forum, which took place in December 2012. Thousands of young people participated, both in Bali and through virtual forums, and it was deemed very successful. The second Global Thematic Meeting would be on human rights, and take place in The Hague, Netherlands, from 7 to 10 July 2013: the ICPR Review International Conference on Human Rights would look at best practices on critical human rights issues, focusing on sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and population and development. The overarching themes would be issues of inequality, discrimination and accountability. The third Global Thematic Meeting, on women’s health, had not yet been arranged but would probably take place in the Latin America region in July or August. That meeting would look for effective ways to implement universal access to sexual and reproductive health services.

The outcomes of the global survey and the thematic meetings would ultimately feed into the report and identify new priorities as well as fresh evidence on new and better ways of
further implementing the ICPD agenda: linkages with the wider global agenda; updating of goals of the Programme of Action and a discussion by Member States around unresolved and open issues. Unresolved issues that had emerged so far from the thematic meeting in Bali and the global survey report findings centred on recognition and non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity, sexual orientation, the right to planned families, equal status for women and girls including in the context of harmful practices, violence and forced or early marriage, sexuality and education, and mainstreaming sexuality into the rights and development agenda. Ms. Armitage shared a Regional Review Process Map (available in her presentation, attached), which showed a detailed timeframe for upcoming meetings.

In summary the three mandated reports linked to the post-2015 Development Agenda were: the Secretary-General’s ICPD Review Report (Cairo III); the Secretary-General’s Summary ICPD Review Report; and the Index Report of key issues for implementation indentified in the 2014 session of the Committee on Population and Development (CPD). The results of regional, global and other thematic analyses, as well as the outcomes of regional population conferences taking place between June and September 2013, would contribute both to the Secretary-General’s report for a special event on Millennium Development Goals in September and the national positions Member States would take for that event. UNFPA was leveraging strong inter-agency and civil society ownership of the post-2015 development agenda. Final reports would be available to Member States and the public by January 2014 for messaging for the forty-seventh CPD session and UNGASS, as well as for post-2015 intergovernmental process.

**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

VITALIJA GAUCAITE WITTICH, Chief, Population Unit, Statistical Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, explained that UNECE was the regional branch of the United Nations and worked with 56 Member States spreading from North America, Europe and Central Asia to Israel. It was a diverse region but it faced similar issues to others. In July 2012 the Global Survey questionnaire was sent to the 56 Member States and to date 46 questionnaires had been completed and returned. UNECE asked States to incorporate not only government views but also views of civil society in their replies. Although the deadline had passed, some questionnaires were still being submitted or had been promised soon. Information gathered would be condensed into a Regional Report. The Regional Report would show what had happened over the last 20 years, the achievements, the challenges and the emerging issues pertinent to local populations that must be addressed beyond 2014. It was a difficult task but UNECE had support from excellent academic experts in Vienna. A draft of the report would be ready to send to Member States by the end of May so they could check the information they had provided was complete and correct.

The resulting Regional Report would be launched at UNECE’s forthcoming Regional Conference “Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st century” to be held in Geneva from 1 to 2 July 2013. The Conference – organized jointly with UNFPA – would conclude the ICPD Beyond 2014 review in the UNECE region. In addition to the launch of the Regional Report on the implementation of the ICDP Programme of Action, the Conference would contribute to the debate on the Post 2015 Development Agenda by discussing progress made towards achieving the goals set in Cairo at the original ICPD, identifying neglected areas and outlining future rights-based policy directions to accelerate implementation and reduce inequalities.

Over 200 participants would attend the Conference. Governments had been invited to nominate three delegates from their country, which should include a parliamentarian as well as representatives of academia and civil society. The meetings would be public in any case, so any member of civil society was free to attend. The conference would open with a high-level plenary session featuring a keynote speech by the former President of Finland, Tarja Halonen. There would be three thematic sessions titled: Population
Dynamics and Sustainable Development; Families, Sexual and Reproductive Health over the Life Course; and Inequalities, Social Inclusion and Rights. Finally a panel discussion on 'Partnership and International Cooperation' would take place. Preparatory discussions with experts on those themes were already taking place. UNECE hoped that all the members of civil society present today would get involved with the Conference, registration for which could be done via the website: www.unece.org/icpd-2014/unece-regional-conference.

**Dialogue with Non-Governmental Organization Representatives**

Ms. Armitage of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was asked whether key priorities for the post-2015 agenda had already been identified. She replied that although specific goals and targets had not yet been identified, UNFPA had participated in all of the thematic consultations that had taken place around the world so far, and had actually led on the issue of population dynamics, as seen in the recent Bangladesh Conference. Universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare was a vital target, which was added to the Millennium Development Goals in 2007, but was still very much an unfinished goal and remained on the agenda. Other priorities included issues surrounding population growth, ageing and urbanization.

Alessandra Vellucci of the United Nations Information Service noted that the United Nations Secretary-General last week launched the ‘MDG Momentum – 1,000 Days of Action’ campaign which marks 1,000 days until the deadline for fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals. The Secretary-General had made several proclamations on the subject and the campaign featured prominently across the United Nations family. More information could be found at www.un.org/millenniumgoals/mdgmomentum.

Responding to a question about a debate held at the most recent session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on ‘protection of the family’, which concluded with a draft resolution failing to adopted, Ms. Armitage of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said the subject was not a new issue and in fact the original Cairo Conference featured negotiations on language and terminology related to families, recognizing that there were different types of families. There was clearly polarization on that very important issue which would undoubtedly be further debated within the Human Rights Council. Of course UNFPA’s position was the position of the ICDP and of what Member States decided should be the follow-up.

Answering a question about the role of civil society in this field, Ms. Armitage said civil society was instrumental in formulating the ICDP Programme of Action, in implementing it, and today in reviewing it. Civil society was involved in many different aspects of the process. Obviously at State level it depended upon the country but there was civil society involvement at all regional levels through the United Nations Regional Commissions. Working together was key and there were many opportunities to do that. Traditionally civil society working on issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights had been quite active in advocating for their inclusion in the post-2015 agenda, but beyond that it was key to create a broad platform of NGOs to ensure that the issues were incorporated into the sustainable development agenda.

Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe said they had convened a high-level expert group on the ICDP on which civil society was very well represented, although it was easier to work with NGOs that had been longer established as they were generally better organized. Furthermore UNECE had suggested that Governments include civil society in their delegations to the forthcoming Conference. Of course there were some problematic areas such as Central Asia and post Soviet States where NGOs were just starting up and were sometimes repressed but generally in central Europe civil society was very active and very involved.
Ms. Armitage replied to a query about how UNFPA worked with UN Women, saying that the agency was a key partner and they collaborated closely. UN Women was part of the Working Group on Indicators that drafted the Global Survey.

It was asked whether the human rights and development implications of the tremendous demographic redistribution of age distribution – increasing numbers of older people and decreasing numbers of younger people – which was creating enormous problems, economic and more, would be included in future discussions. Ms. Wittich responded that they would and already the issues of ageing, youth and solidarity between generations had been widely discussed. Consensus was that ageing populations should be seen as an opportunity not a threat. Given a timely response with means and good strategies much could be done to not only preserve existing human rights but improve them.

Ms. Armitage added that there had been good advances since Cairo on the rights of older persons, including health and social security issues, which were very important issues. Recently Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights organized a public consultation on the rights of older persons.

AMEL HAFFOUZ, Civil Society Outreach Unit, Communications, Information and Outreach, UNCTAD, gave a flash update on the:

**UNCTAD Public Symposium**

An annual event since 2009, the 2013 Symposium would take place at the Palais des Nations from 24 to 25 June 2013 and follow the theme 'New Economic Approaches for a Coherent Post 2015 Agenda'. The Public Symposium was the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s annual outreach event where a wide range of stakeholders – including government officials, representatives of civil society, the private sector and international organizations, and academics and parliamentarians – could engage in an open and interactive dialogue on trade and development issues.

The first day (24 June) would focus on macro-economic and financial governance issues in a panel discussion moderated by Tom Miles, Chief Correspondent of Reuters in Geneva that would debate the creation of a global partnership that could support more inclusive and sustainable development. The session would explore concrete steps at national, regional and global levels that could stabilize finance and redirect it towards investments in productive capacities and environmental sustainability. The second day (25 June), would feature a panel discussion on questions of trade, technology and investment policy that needed to be addressed at the national and international level in order to bring about a more balanced world economy. The objective was to identify emerging best practices to support sustainable development in a range of policy areas including trade and investment, food security, aid for trade and regional cooperation. In the afternoons parallel breakout sessions would take place to bring together leading experts from government agencies, civil society and academia, being moderated by a representative from a civil society organization, a United Nations agency or a Member State.

Invited panel members included Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, Ricardo Patiño, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Integration of Ecuador, and Arnaud Montebourg, Minister of Industrial Renewal of France. In addition, Lamido Sanusi, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, and Murat Karimsakov, President of the Eurasian Economic Club of Scientists Association, Kazakhstan had been invited. From the United Nations system Amina J. Mohammed, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning, would attend and from the private sector, Paul Polman, Chief Executive Officer of Unilever, and Betty Maina, Chief Executive of the Kenya Association of Manufacturers were coming. Civil society invitees included Kouglo Lawson-Body, Head of Economic Research, International Trade Union Confederation, Togo; Kinda Mohamadieh, Arab NGO Network for Development; Tony Tujan, Director of IBON International, the Philippines; and Sanya Reid Smith and Gyekye Tanoh from the Third World Network-Africa. UNCTAD was also pleased to have secured
the participation of leading academics such as Professor Ha-Joon Chang of the University of Cambridge; Professor Vijay Prashad of Trinity College, Hartford; and Professor Gouda Abdel-Khalek, Faculty of Economics, Cairo University; as well as Martin Khor, Executive Director, South Centre.

A dedicated website – unctad.org/publicsymposium/2013 - had been set up where any stakeholder wishing to attend could fill out the mandatory registration online before the deadline of 1 June 2013. Over 180 registrations had been received so far, in just one week, so the event was generating plenty of interest. Further information on the programme of the Symposium would be available soon while the website would be updated on a regular basis before and during the Symposium with audio files, photos, news, press releases, and summaries of the discussions.

JOLANDA GROEN, United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, gave a flash update on other activities relevant to non-governmental organizations:

**UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs**

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Annual Consultations with non-governmental organizations would take place in the International Conference Centre in Geneva from 11 to 13 June, an annual event that had now been taking place for over quarter of a century and provided an important platform for more than 350 NGO representatives to raise issues, network and exchange views with UNHCR. Participants could register online via www.unhcr.org/ngo-consultations by the deadline of 10 May 2013.

**Potential and Limits of Social and Solidarity Economy**

From 6 to 8 May the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development (UNRISD), in cooperation with International Labour Organization and the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) would host a three-day conference on the ‘Potential and Limits of Social and Solidarity Economy’. The conference would explore the potential and limits of organizations such as cooperatives, women's self-help groups, social enterprise and associations of informal workers that had explicit social, environmental and economic objectives. The conference aimed to raise the visibility of debates on those topics within the United Nations system and beyond, and contribute to international policy circles on the post-2015 development agenda. Registration was open for the Conference, which would have English-French and French-English interpretation, via the website www.unrisd.org/sseconf.

**High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development**

The official United Nations website for the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development to be held in New York from 3 to 4 October 2013 was now available at www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/HLD2013. The website also contained information on the informal interactive hearings that would take place in New York on 15 July 2013. Representatives of organizations with or without ECOSOC status could register on the website before the deadline of 15 May 2013.