



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



Parliamentary Dialogue on the Sixth Regional Review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

Population and Development in the Arab Region:
Challenges and Prospects Ten Years After the 2013 Cairo Declaration

Online, 11 May 2023

I. Background

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) represented a remarkable consensus among 179 Governments that human rights and dignity are necessary preconditions for sustainable development. The ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) reinforced linkages between population, development and the environment, and shifted international discourse on population and development from a focus on reaching specific demographic targets towards a greater emphasis on people's wellbeing and their individual rights and choices.

The PoA identified a set of objectives and goals covering a plethora of issues in the context of sustainable development, including population, sustained economic growth and poverty; education, gender equality, equity and empowerment of women; sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; mortality and morbidity; population distribution, urbanization and migration. It also addressed the specific needs and challenges of various population groups in light of emerging demographic trends, environmental changes and other social and economic developments.

The ICPD reviews undertaken over the span of 25 years affirmed that the goals are still legitimate despite the significant progress made globally on several fronts. In the Arab Region, the reviews of the PoA revealed impressive declines in infant, child and maternal death rates; improved reproductive health care and family planning services; increasing school enrolment ratios; improved gender parity in education; and improved access to safe water, among other goals. At the same time, the regional reviews also documented that progress has been partial and uneven among and within countries, and shortfalls remain in key areas such youth development, quality of education, empowerment of women and girls, rural development and persistent gender-based violence. In addition, new challenges and realities emerged such as shifts in demographic structure, increased migration and urbanization, climate change and rising inequalities. The fourth review of the ICPD in the Arab region, resulted in the adoption of the 2013 Cairo Declaration, an intergovernmentally negotiated roadmap for achieving the ICPD objectives in the Arab region.

II. The Sixth Regional Review Process of ICPD

Against this backdrop, ESCWA, UNFPA Arab States Regional Office (UNFPA-ASRO) and LAS, are co-leading its ten-year review of the 2013 Cairo Declaration, as part of the review and appraisal of the ICPD PoA 30-years after its adoption.

To ensure a systematic and effective process, the review is composed of several stages:

- In October 2022, Member States nominated national focal points that were invited to lead the coordination and preparation of the voluntary national review reports.
- To support Member States representatives with developing the national reports, ESCWA, UNFPA and LAS prepared a guiding template in line with the structure and narrative of Cairo Declaration 2013.
- ESCWA, UNFPA and LAS also organized two capacity building workshops: the first one discussed the modality of the review process and agreed on the guiding template. The second workshop reviewed the progress made by countries in collecting the information needed for the reports. The findings from the voluntary review reports will be synthesized in a regional review report and will be presented in the Regional Review Conference.
- The review process also includes a series of consultative dialogues with various constituencies including parliamentarians, and non-governmental stakeholders in May 2023 to ensure their optimal engagement in the review process.
- Finally, the regional review process will culminate in a Regional Review Conference that will be held in a hybrid format in Beirut, on 19-20 September 2023.

III. Parliamentary Dialogue on the Sixth Review of the International Conference on Population and Development in the Arab Region: Challenges and Prospects Ten Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration

The ICPD PoA (1994) acknowledges the positive role of parliamentarians in shaping public opinion and public policy and urges them to be actively involved in increasing awareness of population and development issues and to take the required actions to monitor and appraise progress towards meeting the goals of the ICPD PoA, in accordance with national priorities. In addition, it calls for regular exchanges of experiences among parliamentarians at the subregional, regional, interregional and international levels, where appropriate to ensure its effective implementation.

Similarly, the 2013 Cairo Declaration calls for engaging all relevant stakeholders, including policy-makers, parliamentarians, educators, health care providers, the private sector and the media, in creating an environment conducive for the implementation of the Declaration and to the enjoyment of rights by all population groups.

A. Objective of the parliamentary dialogue

The dialogue aims at bringing together parliamentarians from the Arab region to:

- a. Provide an overview of the ICPD regional review process at regional and national levels, present key demographic trends and patterns in the Arab region, and discuss common trends, challenges and gaps in implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration.
- b. Facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise on the engagement of the parliamentarians and their contributions to population and development issues, and in monitoring the implementation of the Cairo Declaration at national and regional levels.
- c. Raise awareness and build on earlier commitments made at relevant parliamentarians' forums, including the parliamentarians' meeting to follow-up on ICPD@25 commitments.
- d. Discuss challenges faced and means to optimize the engagement of parliamentarians with population issues as well as in integrating population matters in national policy making processes, with a view to accelerate the implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration.

B. Participants

The dialogue will bring together parliamentarians from Arab countries concerned with social and population issues, including members of Committees on lawmaking, social affairs, education, health, human rights, and budget.

C. Date and venue

The dialogue will be held virtually on 11 May 2023, in **Arabic**, from 10:00 am to 13:00 pm Beirut time as per the proposed organization of work below. The link to the meeting will be provided to the confirmed participants ahead of time.

D. Expected outcomes

- a. Increased knowledge among parliamentarians on the regional review process of the 2013 Cairo Declaration.
- b. An outcome document that summarizes key messages and recommendations to optimize Arab parliaments' engagement in the implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration. The document will feed into the regional review Conference to be held in September 2023.

E. Proposed Organization of Work

9:45-10:00	Online Registration
10:00-10:10	<p>Welcoming remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr. Laila Baker, Regional Director of the Arab States Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA-ASRO). - Dr. Sara Salman, First Social Affairs Officer, Gender Justice, Population, and Inclusive Development Cluster, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). - Ms. Chouaa Dassouki, Minister plenipotentiary and Director of the Population Policies Department, League of Arab States (LAS).
10:10-10:30	<p>Scene Setting</p> <p>This session will set the scene for the discussion by introducing the ICPD and the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the regional review process. It will also present key demographic trends and patterns in the Arab region, highlight common trends,</p>

	<p>challenges, and gaps in the implementation of the Declaration 10-years post its adoption.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr. Hala Youssef, Regional Advisor on Sexual and Reproductive Health, UNFPA-ASRO. - Ms. Dina Tannir, Social Affairs Officer, ESCWA. <p>Q&A</p>
10:30-12:00	<p>Open discussion: The role of parliamentarians in addressing population and development issues.</p> <p>This session will offer a platform for dialogue and peer-learning among Arab parliamentarians building on positive experiences in addressing the different population and development issues emphasized in the 2013 Cairo Declaration through their lawmaking, oversight, budgeting, and representative roles.</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Hala Youssef, Regional Advisor on Sexual and Reproductive Health, UNFPA-ASRO.</p> <p><u>Questions for guiding the discussion:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you respond to population priorities through your legislative, oversight, budgeting, and representation functions? - Does your Parliament have mechanisms to consult with the different stakeholders on population issues? - Are there success stories in addressing the priorities of different population groups (including older persons, migrants, women, youth and persons with disabilities)? - What are the best practices in integrating a gender perspective in developing and implementing measures to address population issues?
12:00-12:05	<i>Break</i>
12:05-12:55	<p>Open discussion: Strengthening the role of parliaments to accelerate the implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration in the Arab region.</p> <p>This session will provide a platform to discuss the various challenges faced by the parliamentarians working on population issues and propose concrete solutions to ensure that Arab parliamentarians are actively involved in implementing the Cairo Declaration 2013. In addition, the session will seek to generate concrete recommendations that will be presented in the upcoming ICPD Regional Review Conference.</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Rita Giacaman, Professor of Public Health and Research and Program Coordinator, Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University.</p> <p><u>Questions for guiding the discussion:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the main challenges that you face in responding to population priorities? - What practical steps are proposed to galvanize your role in accelerating the implementation of Cairo Declaration 2013?
12:55-13:00	Closing remarks and the way forward

F. Documentation

- The Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994. Available in English from: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/PoA_en.pdf and in Arabic from: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N95/231/24/PDF/N9523124.pdf?OpenElement>
- United Nations General Assembly, 21st special session 1999. Key Actions for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Available in Arabic from: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/363747?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>
- United Nations General Assembly, 65th Session, 2011. Follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014. Available in English from: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_65_234.pdf
- ESCWA, UNFPA, LAS and ECA, 2013. Cairo Declaration, Regional Conference on Population and Development in the Arab States (ICPD Beyond 2014), Cairo, 24 - 26 June 2013. Available in English and Arabic from <https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/publications/cairo-declaration>
- 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 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>.
- ESCWA, UNFPA and LAS, 2018. Final Report of the Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration, Beirut 30 October-1 November 2018, available in English and Arabic from: <https://archive.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/arab-regional-conference-population-development-final-report-ar.pdf>
- UNFPA, ESCWA and LAS, 2019. Regional report of the Regional Conference on Population and Development 2018. Reviewing the Implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration. Available in English from: https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ICPD%20Regional%20English%20report%20final%20for%20web.July2019_0.pdf
- UNFPA, 2019. The Report on Nairobi Summit on ICPD 25. Accelerating the Promise. Available in English from: <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/accelerating-promise-report-nairobi-summit-icpd25>