

STATEMENT

FOR

**THE HONOURABLE LYNNE YELICH
MINISTER OF STATE (FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND CONSULAR)**

**to the 29th Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly – Follow-up
to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and
Development beyond 2014**

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Mr. President,

Thank you for this opportunity to address the General Assembly.

I am pleased to be here to mark the 20th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development and its Programme of Action.

The Programme of Action was prescient.

It highlighted the importance of addressing population and development issues in a way that put individuals' well-being at the centre.

It recognized that sustainable progress would only be achieved if we worked on population, human rights, sustainable economic growth and sustainable development together.

And it recognized that the interrelationships were what required attention.

It is this idea—of addressing issues holistically, of recognizing their interdependence—that has most contributed to the progress that has been achieved.

For Canada, maternal, newborn and child health is the top development priority.

When Canada's Prime Minister hosted the Saving Every Woman, Every Child summit last May in Toronto, he reaffirmed our commitment to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children within a generation.

And we committed an additional \$3.5 billion through to 2020 to support these efforts.

But—if we are speaking holistically—we cannot talk about child health without also talking about ending child, early and forced marriages. Because the two are interconnected.

These arrangements harm health, halt education and destroy opportunities for young women.

It is encouraging to see other countries—including those with a high prevalence of child, early and forced marriages—starting to speak out and take action against this issue

Our government is also standing up for these girls, and indeed, for all girls and women.

We also believe that education, and equal rights for boys and girls, are cornerstones of development. That they are central to our child-protection programming.

And that, particularly in conflict zones, it is critical for children—both girls and boys—to keep learning and to keep going to school. So they can free their minds of the anxiety of conflict, and instead focus on the pursuit of knowledge and the betterment of skills.

In the long term, the children and youth who have received an education or vocational training will become skilled workers who will participate actively in rebuilding their society and strengthening their economy.

This is one of the keys to reducing poverty.

When economies thrive, so do the citizens who fuel them.

Canada believes that sustainable economic growth and development is particularly possible when all partners buy in.

That is why we collaborate with the private sector and civil society, both uniquely equipped to spur innovation and bring greater investment to the developing world.

Canada has a long history of working with civil society to extend the reach of our programs and achieve lasting results. And we are increasingly working with private sector companies to capitalize on the knowledge, expertise and opportunity they bring to developing countries.

Canada is also a champion of civil registration and vital statistics systems as the foundation for accountability. These systems are crucial to advancing maternal, newborn and child health.

They can tell us whether our efforts are working, and where we can make a greater difference.

They also provide children with a legal identity, which helps them to access services such as health care and education, protects them from exploitation and abuse, and later in life, enables them to be part of the formal economy.

We believe that robust, effective civil registration and vital statistics systems will help us achieve transformative change across the sustainable development agenda.

Mr. President, let me conclude by noting that the directions set forward at the International Conference on Population and Development still resonate today.

The lessons we have learned from working in a holistic way should inform our efforts post-2015.

Going forward, Canada will ensure that women and children are at the core of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

It is clear that we are making progress. But we need to stay the course.

Thank you.