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**General debate on national experience in population matters:
“Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the
post-2015 Development agenda”**

Statement submitted by the Center for Reproductive Rights, Inc., a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council²

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

¹ E/CN.9/2016/1.

² The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Strengthening the demographic evidence base to ensure no one is left behind in the post-2015 development agenda

The Center for Reproductive Rights, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, welcomes the opportunity to present this written statement in advance of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on Population and Development on the theme of “Strengthening the demographic evidence base of the post-2015 development agenda”. The Center for Reproductive Rights (the Center) is a global legal advocacy organization dedicated to promoting reproductive rights as fundamental human rights that states are obligated to respect, protect and fulfil. Headquartered in New York, with regional offices in Bogota, Geneva, Kathmandu, Nairobi, and Washington, D.C., the Center was involved in the post-2015 negotiations, attending the Open Working Group meetings, working with the Women’s Major Group and Human Rights Caucus, engaging in advocacy with mission delegates and producing resources to input to the process. The Center remains active in discussions around implementation, follow-up, and review of the post-2015 agenda, particularly with respect to the goals and targets addressing gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Strengthening the demographic evidence base is essential to the effective implementation, follow-up, and review of the post-2015 agenda. A robust and comprehensive evidence base must go beyond national averages and identify and address disparities among different groups in order to ensure that no one is left behind and that everyone benefits from this transformative agenda. Shortfalls in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the goal of reducing maternal mortality, were most acute among marginalized groups. Marginalized groups often are unable to access programmes or services and face disproportionate barriers in demanding formal policy or legal change. Ensuring the participation of marginalized groups in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of development plans is critical to address disparities in realizing human rights and development goals — a point that human rights bodies and advocates, including the Center for Reproductive Rights and our partners, have long recognized.

Human rights treaties and bodies have provided concrete guidance on states’ obligations to address disparities and realize gender equality. In particular, the human rights framework recognizes that women may face intersectional discrimination — as women with disabilities, from racial minorities, with low socioeconomic status, living with HIV, or indigenous women, among others — that requires states to address their distinctive needs. The findings of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the case of *Alyne da Silva Pimentel v. Brazil* provide a concrete example of the barriers faced by marginalized women and what states must do to remediate them. Filed by the Center for Reproductive Rights and our partners, this case resulted from the denial of timely, maternal health care to an Afro-Brazilian woman during an obstetric emergency, which ultimately led to her death. In finding that Brazil discriminated against her in ensuring her rights to health and life, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women highlighted that the poor quality of care that Alyne received was not only linked to discrimination based on her gender, but also to her

race and socioeconomic status. Noting that while Brazil had policies in place to provide comprehensive maternal health care to women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women found that those policies were not implemented so as to achieve equality of health outcomes for all women in Brazil.

The Alyne case is but one example that highlights the rich guidance that the human rights framework provides states for understanding and implementing their obligations when it comes to ensuring gender equality for all, including marginalized groups. This framework should help guide the implementation and follow up and review processes of the post-2015 agenda. Understanding and addressing the disparities within and across countries is necessary in order to eliminate preventable maternal mortality, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, and achieve gender equality.

In addition to strengthening the demographic evidence base by ensuring that marginalized groups benefit in terms of outcomes, it is also important to identify ways to assess process and structural issues. The participation and inclusion of marginalized groups in all aspects of development policy (planning and design, implementation, and monitoring) is key to ensuring that these policies are actually benefiting everyone and to making appropriate adjustments if they are not. As such, it will be critical to assess which groups participate in decision-making and implementation around development policies across the targets and indicators. In addition, structural issues, like the functioning of a national health system, are central to the realization of a number of the targets, including those relating to maternal mortality, universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, as well as inequalities and discrimination in accessing these services. Though these structural concerns impact individuals, they are not easily captured in individualized demographic data. As such, indicators should be included that assess the process of development and encompass concepts that may only be assessed through qualitative observation. For instance, achieving gender equality and addressing disparities among groups might require states to change their legal framework and provide effective accountability mechanisms — changes that do not easily lend themselves to quantitative assessments but can be qualitatively observed.

Strengthening the demographic evidence base of the post-2015 agenda requires linking human rights and development to ensure that all individuals, including the most marginalized, are included in the planning, implementation, and monitoring and benefiting from development plans and that development programmes respect people's fundamental rights.
