

**STATEMENT TO THE FORTIETH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT
REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON WORLD DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS
(E/CN.9/2007/6)**

**AGENDA ITEM 5. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE PROGRAMME OF
WORK IN THE FIELD OF POPULATION**

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have the honour to introduce today document E/CN.9/2007/6 entitled *World Demographic Trends*. The report presents an overview of global demographic trends based on results from the *2004 Revision of World Population Prospects*. I wish to inform you that the *2006 Revision of World Population Prospects* was released last month. A copy of the *Highlights* from the *2006 Revision* can be found in the back of the room. Although the 2006 Revision projects a 2050 population that is slightly higher than the one projected by the *2004 Revision* (9.2 billion instead of 9.1 billion), general population trends are very similar in both *Revisions*. For consistency with the report you are considering, I will use here *2004 Revision* figures.

The world's population continues to grow. It is estimated at 6.6 billion today and it is expected to increase by about two and a half billion to reach 9.1 billion in 2050. Most of you may already be familiar with this number because it has been made famous by none other than former United States Vice-President Al Gore who used it in his documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. In case you have not seen the film yet, here is the slide showing the increase of population from 2.5 billion in 1950 to 6.6 billion in 2007 and, to 9.1 billion in 2050. The increase between now and 2050 will almost exclusively take place in the less developed regions of the world.

Future fertility levels are key determinants of the expected population growth in developing countries. Fertility rates have declined almost everywhere since 1950. This slide shows fertility rates in 1950. Women in countries shaded red had more than 5 children on average. Those countries are mainly developing countries. Only a handful of countries had below replacement fertility then. The situation has changed dramatically by 2000-2005. Many countries had reached below-replacement fertility by that time and in many others women were having less than 3 children per woman. However, there were still a number of countries where fertility was above 4 children per woman. Those countries where fertility levels remain high will be growing very fast. Among the high fertility countries, there are more than a dozen countries where fertility has not yet started to decline, most of them belonging to the group of least developed countries. And there

are as many as 44 countries where total fertility is still above four children per woman. Partly because of the rapid growth expected in many developing countries, more than half of them consider their population growth too high. There is growing recognition among developing countries that the further reduction of population growth is necessary to ease mounting pressure on renewable and non-renewable resources and on the environment and to facilitate the achievement of all major development goals.

High fertility tends to be associated with low contraceptive prevalence. In Africa, where fertility is still very high with an average of 4.7 children per woman, contraceptive prevalence is only 27 per cent of currently married women, much lower than the average for the less developed regions as a whole, which stands at 59 per cent of currently married women.

As a result of declining fertility and, to a lesser extent, lower mortality, there are large ongoing changes in population age-structures worldwide, as you have heard during the course of this session. In particular, the number of people aged 60 years or over is expected to increase from 0.7 billion in 2007 to almost 2 billion in 2050. By 2045 the number of older persons will likely surpass the number of children below the age 15. There are again large regional contrasts in the world. In Europe the older population has outnumbered children since 1995 and there will be twice as many older persons as children in 2050. Population ageing is also taking place in the developing countries, particularly in Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean. Indeed, 60 per cent of the elderly live in developing countries today and this proportion will increase to 80 per cent by the year 2050. Africa is the exception with a population that is still young and where the main concern regarding age composition refers to the very large proportion of children, particularly in the countries where fertility has not yet started to decline.

It is also in Africa where the HIV/AIDS epidemic takes a devastating toll. Two thirds of the HIV infected persons live in Sub-Saharan Africa and prevalence is increasing worldwide. Partly because of the high prevalence of HIV, life expectancy remains low in the least developed countries at just 55 years.

Mr. Chairman,

International migration continues to increase. We estimate that there were 191 million international migrants in the world in 2005, most of them living in the developed countries, and most of them originating in developing countries. Most of the increase in the number of international migrants between 1990 and 2005 was concentrated in high-income countries, where, because of low fertility, international migration has become a major component of overall population growth. Thus, in eight developed countries net migration is more than double natural increase. In another eight developed countries, international migration counterbalances the excess of deaths over births. Most of these countries are located in Europe.

Together with increased international migration, urbanization continues to spread. The wall Chart on World Urbanization Prospects shows that, in 2008 for the first time in

history, there will be more urban dwellers than rural inhabitants. This trend will continue and most of the world's population growth is expected to occur in urban areas. The increase in the urban population is particularly concentrated in the less developed regions. Thus, by 2030, four-fifths of the urban population will be living in the less developed regions. Urban and city planners as well as Governments will face important challenges, such as the potential increase in urban poverty and the growth of slums.

In sum, Mr. Chairman, the world is the midst of an era of dynamic population change, reflected in new and diverse patterns of childbearing, mortality, population ageing, international migration and urbanization. The consequences of these population trends present opportunities and raise challenges for all societies as the twenty-first century continues to unfold.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates, thank you very much for your attention.