



Check Against Delivery

Statement by

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on the

**Report of the Secretary-General on the Monitoring of Population Programmes,
Focusing on Population Distribution, Urbanization,
Internal Migration and Development
(E/CN.9/2008/4)**

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to introduce the Report of the Secretary-General on the *Monitoring of Population Programmes, Focusing on Population Distribution, Urbanization, Internal Migration and Development* (E/CN.9/2008/4). The document has been prepared by the United Nations Population Fund in response to the topic-oriented and prioritized multi-year work programme of the Commission on Population and Development.

The Report examines the unprecedented transformation of world population from rural to urban brought about by migration from rural areas to cities and the natural increase of the urban population, as well as the reclassification of settlements that were previously considered rural. The report examines the economic, social, demographic and environmental implications of urbanization and describes some common misconceptions about urban growth. It suggests the way forward to unleash the potential of urban growth and describes the programmatic work of UNFPA to assist countries in responding to the challenges of rapid urbanization.

Mr. Chairman, more than 10 years ago, UNFPA predicted in its report *State of World Population 2006 – Changing Places: Population, Development and the Urban Future* that the growth of cities would be the single largest influence on development in the twenty-first century. I would like to point out that this is indeed the case today. This year, for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population will be living in urban areas.

The urban transformation has important implications for development. The phenomenon is particularly significant because it is taking place mostly in developing countries and because the increases in urban population are very large and occurring very rapidly. The poor make up a large proportion of city growth and future urban growth will mainly involve poor people. One billion people already live in slums. Many of them live in overcrowded conditions and do not have access to adequate public services, sanitation and clean water.

Urbanization can play a positive role in social and economic development. But to benefit from the advantages of cities, countries must respond to the growing numbers of urban dwellers with appropriate policies and programmes. First of all, planners must come to terms with the fact that urbanization is inevitable. People will continue to migrate to cities in search of opportunities.

The real issue is not just that cities grow too fast, but that national and local Governments are not always prepared to absorb the increasing number of urbanites. Pro-active approaches are needed to plan for future urban growth. Policies and programmes must be developed by involving different stakeholders and they must respond to the needs of the diverse demographic groups in cities, particularly the poor, whose voices must also be heard.

Mr. Chairman, UNFPA supports key population, urbanization and sustainable development activities at the global, regional and country levels. UNFPA helps countries to develop effective public policies that respond to the challenges posed by rapid urbanization and that meet the needs of all persons, especially the poor and most vulnerable. The Fund seeks to

raise awareness of the interrelationships among global population growth, demographic dynamics, urbanization, the environment, sustainable development and poverty reduction. UNFPA encourages policy dialogue, capacity-building, data collection, research and advocacy as part of a good strategy for policy and programmatic support.

Many UNFPA Country Offices have been called upon to assist Governments in formulating policies and national strategies relating to population distribution, internal migration and urbanization. In supporting Governments in the implementation of national development plans and poverty reduction strategies, UNFPA helped to ensure that population issues, including urbanization and internal migration, were incorporated into development frameworks. In many countries, the Fund supported the collection of data, especially through censuses and surveys, as well as thematic studies and research for evidence-based policy formulation and programme implementation. UNFPA also promoted capacity building by supporting training institutions and by providing technical assistance.

Mr. Chairman, last year, UNFPA launched its *State of World Population 2007* report entitled *Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth* in which it focused on the importance of good governance, pro-active measures and sound policies to prepare for future urban growth. The key message is that developing pro-active measures will enhance the potential of cities as places of opportunity and hope. The main challenge is to learn from each other's experiences how to exploit the possibilities and potential of urban areas.

Thank you.