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Agenda Item 7:
Programme implementation and progress of work in the field of population

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Mr Chairman,

On behalf of the Norwegian delegation I would like to congratulate the Population Division for continuing its excellent work. Your high-quality estimates, projections and analyses provide essential background and input to the discussion of population issues all over the world. They also play an essential role for the deliberations of the CPD. Without your contributions our work would have been much more difficult.

Your population projections continue to serve as the most authoritative projections of the future population size and composition of the world. They are challenged by only a few. Your projections have, however, perhaps been relied upon too much, in the sense that users believe that what you are projecting is actually going to happen. I therefore welcome your new long-term projections to 2300 and their presentation in the report on World demographic trends to this year's CPD.

It is, of course, impossible to make reliable population forecasts to the year 2300, almost 300 years into the future. But your projections show clearly the effects of different fertility and mortality scenarios. They make it crystal clear that current levels of fertility and mortality are not sustainable in the long run. According to your constant-fertility scenario the world population would reach fully 3.5 trillion people in 2300, which is obviously not going to happen. Your report also highlights the fact that the demographic transition need not necessarily be completed.

I am a bit surprised, however, that you in the medium scenario assume that all countries are going

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to have a fertility level of 1.85 children per woman for 100 years. After that you assume that the fertility level increases to the replacement level and remains there until 2100. You do this, as you say, to "prevent a continuing population decline". This may give the impression that you are afraid of presenting a declining world population, since the medium scenario is still presented as the most likely series. People concerned about green house emissions, for example, argue that the world population size actually needs to go down.

In the constant fertility scenario you keep fertility and mortality levels constant in each country but still find a strongly increasing world fertility level, from 2.6 children now to 6.2 children in 2300. This scenario also shows a declining world life expectancy, from 68 to 53 years. The reason is, as you point out, that the population grows faster in countries with higher fertility and higher mortality. It is important that you so clearly demonstrate this compositional effect.

Finally, I commend you for continuing to improve your web pages, which are becoming more and more user friendly.

Thank you for your attention, Mr. Chairman