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Ten key findings and points for action

Secretary-General's report on World demographic trends (E/CN.9/2014/3)

1. The world's population continues to grow, albeit at slower rates.

In 2011, the world's population surpassed 7 billion, and may reach 8.1 billion in 2025 and 9.6 billion in 2050. Between 2010 and 2014, the world's population grew at a rate of 1.2 per cent per annum, compared to 1.5 per cent per annum observed during 1994's International Conference on Population and Development, and is expected to keep decelerating.

2. Future population growth will be concentrated in the least developed countries and in Africa.

Between 2014 and 2050, the total population of the 49 least developed countries could double. By 2050, more than 80 per cent of the annual increase in the global population will take place in Africa.

3. In the next few decades, forty countries are expected to experience population decline.

Population decline and the acceleration of population ageing are important concerns for more Governments. Between 2014 and 2050, the populations of more than 40 countries are expected to decrease. Europe is projected to experience population decline after 2020.

4. Countries are demographically more diverse than ever before.

Considerable population diversity exists in future trajectories, driven mostly by differences in fertility. Between 2014 and 2050, all geographic regions should experience reductions in population growth rates. However, major differences will persist. In 2050, it is expected that Africa will be growing more than six times as fast as Latin America and the Caribbean and more than 15 times as fast as Asia.

- It is important to recognize the diversity of the world's population and realize that its future size, structure and spatial distribution will be different from today.

5. The "unmet need" for modern contraceptives remains high, despite family planning successes.

Policies to increase access to contraceptives and accessibility to family planning and reproductive health have been vital in reducing fertility. In 2013, more than 90 per cent of Governments supported family planning programmes. However, the "unmet need," or gap between contraceptive use and

proportion of individuals who wish to space or limit their families, remains high. Worldwide, only seven countries are likely to achieve the agreed benchmark of a 50 per cent reduction in unmet need by 2014 compared to 1994 levels.

- Increased efforts will be needed to provide universal access to voluntary and high quality family planning information, counselling and services for all countries of the world.

6. Despite improvements in life expectancy, significant gaps remain.

Life expectancy at birth for the world rose from 65 years in the period 1990-1995 to 70 years in the period 2010-2015. However, the gap in life expectancy at birth between developed countries and least developed countries, although five years smaller than in the early 1990s, remains high, at 17.1 years.

- Increased efforts to meet the targets for life expectancy, infant mortality, child mortality and maternal mortality included in the ICPD Programme of Action will be needed.

7. International migration has increased in demographic significance and development impact.

In 2013, the number of international migrants worldwide reached 232 million, up from 154 million in 1990. There are more people living outside their country of birth than ever before, and it is expected that the numbers will increase further.

- With international migration increasingly recognized as an enabler of social and economic development, increased efforts are needed to ensure regular, safe and orderly migration.

8. While the number of young persons stabilises, the number of older persons will skyrocket.

The number of young people has grown rapidly, but should stabilise over the next 35 years. But, the number and proportion of older persons are expected to continue rising. Globally, the share of older persons (aged 60 years or older) in the total population increased from 9 per cent in 1994 to 12 per cent in 2014, and is expected to reach 21 per cent by 2050.

- Better policies are needed to meet the needs of ageing populations and to remove barriers to older persons' full participation in society while protecting their rights and dignity.

9. The future rise in the urban population creates both opportunities and challenges.

More than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas. It is expected that almost all of the future population growth of the world will be absorbed by urban areas. The rapid growth of urban populations presents challenges to sustainable urban planning and good governance.

- Urban policies that improve access to education, health care, housing and other services, mitigate environmental impacts, and expand economic opportunities are needed.

10. Population trends will shape the post-2015 UN development agenda.

People are at the heart of sustainable development. Few factors will shape the global development agenda as fundamentally as the size, structure and spatial distribution of the world's population.

- Increased knowledge and understanding of demographic changes is key to develop and carry out a successful post-2015 development agenda, and for achieving internationally agreed goals.