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MESSAGE TO THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

New York, 13 April 2015

*Delivered by Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General
for Economic and Social Affairs*

I am pleased to send greetings to all participants at this session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development. You meet as the international community strives this year to forge a set of sustainable development goals and a meaningful new universal climate agreement. These twin priorities will be influenced by the profound demographic shifts taking place in our world, especially those related to youth, the elderly, urbanization and migration.

Our world now has the largest generation of young people in history. Countries experiencing a ‘youth bulge’ can reap a demographic dividend by optimizing conditions for youth to thrive. This requires enhancing education for both girls and boys, ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health care, and creating more decent jobs.

With persons aged 60 and older comprising the fastest growing age group, workforces are shrinking and populations are greying. We must forge societies where older persons can contribute to the fullest and enjoy the social protections they deserve.

Already more than half of the world’s population lives in cities, and that proportion will grow over the next 15 years, adding urgency to efforts to optimize the benefits of urbanization and overcome its challenges.

We must also create conditions for safe, orderly and regular migration. Far too many migrants suffer from exploitation, discrimination and xenophobia. Addressing these violations of their rights will empower migrants to increase their contributions to development in both countries of origin and destination.

The year 2015 offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to achieve transformational global change. In our world of stark and destabilizing inequality, where hundreds of millions of people struggle against assaults on their human dignity, we must honour our promise to leave no one behind.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action as well as the 2014 operational review underscored the centrality of the rights and worth of every individual. We must be guided by this vision as we aim to help people meet their needs while protecting the environment for generations to come.

Your session can contribute to realizing this ambitious vision, and toward that end I wish you great success.