50th Session
Commission on Population and Development

Changing Population Age Structures and Sustainable Development
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INDIA STATEMENT
Ambassador Tanmaya Lal
Deputy Permanent Representative

Thank you Chairperson,

India associates itself with the statement made by Ecuador on behalf of G-77.

We thank the Secretary General for the well researched and balanced Report on this issue.

The theme of the changing populations structures and sustainable development is quite apt, in the context of the 2030 Agenda, for this landmark fiftieth session of this Commission.

The Commission traces its roots to the Population Commission established seven decades ago soon after the creation of the United Nations.

In these seven decades, the world's population has grown from less than 2.5 billion to more than 7 billion. The primary reason for this exponential increase is the much higher life expectancy made possible by the advances in medicine and the expanding access to vastly improved healthcare.

At the same time, this explosion in population and the accompanying changes in age structures are transforming societies and economies.

In the past decades we have debated the perceived adverse impacts of rapid population increase on the economic development prospects of nations, as also the complex linkages between underdevelopment and population growth. In recent years these debates have focused on broader rights-based approaches involving more stakeholders, including the Right to Development. The 2030 Agenda has brought about a much more comprehensive and inter-linked perspective to the issues of sustainable development.

The ongoing demographic transitions are not uniform across the world. While much of the developed world has to deal with concerns relating to ageing, emerging developing economies are looking at how to utilize the demographic dividend. A large young population represents advantage in terms of availability of workforce for a growing economy and also builds a large consumer base in a market economy.

The increasingly integrated economies rely on human mobility between countries with varying demographic compositions to address gaps in workforce and of specific skill sets. Nine out of ten of the world's youth between the ages of 10 to 24 years, live in developing countries. As the populations in developed nations age, immigrants are seen as necessary to restore the working population ratio for their economies and for financing the social security systems.

Mr. Chairperson,

India, with one sixth of the world's population, is a nation of young people. Nearly two thirds of Indians are younger than 35 years of age. Two thirds of India's population is also estimated to

be between 15 to 65 years of age. The leadership of India is acutely aware of the huge opportunity of this demographic dividend.

It is, therefore, no surprise that the latest Economic Survey of India also focuses on the distinctive Indian demography. It notes that India's demographic cycle is one to three decades behind that of other countries, implying that the next few decades present an opportunity for India to improve per capita income levels. Also, India is likely to remain at the peak ratio of working to non-working age population for a much longer period as compared to many other large economies.

While the ongoing extensive economic reforms and the strength of institutions are making India among the fastest growing large economies, India is expected to sustain its high levels of growth on account of the demographic dividend.

Within India also there is a considerable heterogeneity of demography, primarily between two groups of states categorised as the peninsular and hinterland. While providing education, skills and employment opportunities is the focus in states with younger population, the other states with soon-to-begin-ageing population also require greater attention to the needs of elderly. This heterogeneity within India offers the advantage of addressing some of these concerns via greater labour mobility, which would in effect reduce this demographic imbalance. On a further positive note, the relatively less affluent Indian states have more of a growth dividend ahead of them to exploit the emerging economic opportunities.

The Government of India is placing special emphasis on improving the access to quality education, vocational skills, entrepreneurship and innovation. It is pushing through a comprehensive set of reforms and initiatives alongwith infrastructure development to further catalyze various sectors of economy – agriculture, manufacturing and services.

Initiatives such as One India One Tax, expanding digital financial transactions to curb corruption and expand revenues, Skill India, Make in India, Digital India, Start Up India are steps to pursue these goals.

Over the last weekend thousands of youth participated in the Smart India Hackathon to identify new and disruptive digital technology innovations to address various governance challenges facing the country.

India is also implementing an ambitious financial inclusion programme for social empowerment, especially of women and the more vulnerable sections. Over 1 billion Indians have been issued unique biometric based identity cards. More than 250 million new bank accounts have been opened. Together with mobile phone based transactions, increasing transparency and efficiency of delivery of a range of services is being achieved. This will not only boost the economy but also empower the communities that are marginalized so far.

Together with affordable healthcare, schemes for family planning, health insurance and pension are being implemented.

Mr. Chairperson,

The continuing success achieved by India in lifting millions out of poverty and improving its development levels helped meet the global MDGs in a large measure. The ongoing comprehensive transformation across sectors focused on sustainable development will also have great relevance for our collective global success on SDGs.

It is important that all of us work together on this constructive agenda.

Thank you.

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