

UNITED NATIONS



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MR. LIU ZHENMIN
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS,

Opening Remarks

Fifty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development

CR 4, UNHQ, New York, 9 April 2018, 10:00am

To be delivered by Mr. Elliott Harris, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development/Chief Economist, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to deliver these remarks on behalf of Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, LIU Zhenmin.

Since its inaugural session in 1947, this expert body has been at the forefront of informing the global community about the complex linkages between population dynamics and sustainable development.

In the early decades, persistent high levels of fertility in developing countries – the main driver of global population growth – were widely seen as posing a threat to humanity’s future. Since its inception, this Commission has also focused attention on efforts to reduce mortality and improve global health, including reproductive health. In recent decades, as population movements have become a major challenge, the annual theme of the Commission has included the word “migration” four times since 2006.

Although the nature of the demographic challenges has changed, two things have remained constant over the past 70 years: first, the intrinsic value of the work done by DESA’s Population Division to produce essential information about population trends and policies to inform the Commission’s deliberations; and second, the need for this Commission to provide authoritative guidance to policymakers on how best to respond to the challenges posed by current and future population trends.

Dear delegates,

The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, adopted in Cairo in 1994, was, is and will remain an historic milestone for advancing human development and highlighting the indispensable linkages between all areas of population and development.

The Programme of Action should continue to inform our global actions, including on sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration, the Commission's theme for this year.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind, contains many commitments that were inspired by the Programme of Action of the Cairo conference.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The reports produced for this session illustrate the degree to which urbanization, the growth of cities and human mobility affect an ever-increasing number of people and communities around the world.

In 1950, approximately 750 million people resided in cities. Today, the world's urban population numbers over 4 billion. The increasing concentration of the world's population in cities is radically changing the landscape of human settlement, with major implications for living conditions, the environment and sustainable development.

Equally important is the fact that international mobility is on the rise. The number of international migrants – persons residing outside their country of birth – has increased from around 160 million at the time of the Cairo conference, to its current level of 258 million.

Overly rapid urbanization and poorly managed migration pose serious challenges to sustainable development. National and local governments should work together to implement policies that reap the development benefits of urbanization and international migration, while also managing the potentially negative aspects.

The interlinkages between these two population megatrends — international migration and urbanization – and how they interact with the formation of sustainable cities, is the topic of your deliberations this week. I look forward to reading the Commission's conclusions on these crucial topics.

Dear colleagues,

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has been addressing the world's most pressing development concerns and taking the necessary steps to help advance human progress. We are committed to doing so in the future.

We produce global datasets and studies to assist Member States in their decision-making processes. We facilitate major global conferences and support inter-governmental discussions taking place in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the

subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC such as this Commission. We provide policy advice to countries as they seek to implement the outcomes of UN conferences and other inter-governmental agreements, and we support Governments in building national capacities for implementation.

In all areas of our work, we collaborate with relevant UN agencies, the research community and civil society. DESA believes firmly in the importance of partnerships, as we consider that the major challenges to global development cannot be tackled effectively unless the UN system delivers as one.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations is undertaking a transformative reform. This is a road to a better UN. The purpose is to take down institutional silos instead of creating new ones. We shall always bear this in mind and reinforce coordination to create a holistic approach and work more effectively and efficiently to better serve the Member States.

DESA will work together with partners and other UN entities towards this direction.

This Commission and the Population Division of DESA will continue to play a vital role in understanding the world's most pressing concerns and providing innovative ideas and responses to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

As experts on population and development, your inputs to the high-level political forum on sustainable development are critical.

I am confident, as well, that the work of this community of experts can enrich and inform the ongoing negotiations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration taking place now in the General Assembly.

Let me wish you a very fruitful session.

Thank you.
