

INTRODUCTION

In September 2005, when Heads of State and Government gathered for the World Summit at United Nations Headquarters in New York, they reiterated their determination to ensure the timely and full realization of the development goals and objectives agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits. They reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the goal of sustainable development, and noted that “Poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development.” (A/RES/60/1, para. 48). The Governments also committed themselves to undertake concrete actions in support of sustainable development and to enhance international cooperation, recognizing that those efforts would also promote the three components of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, was a milestone in the evolution of an international consensus on the relationships among population, environment and development. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development identified population policies as an integral element of sustainable development. The Rio Declaration stated that “the growth of world population and production combined with unsustainable consumption patterns places increasingly severe stress on the life-supporting capacities of our planet” (United Nations, 1993a, resolution 1, annex II, para. 5.3).

The central theme at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994, was forging a balance among population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The ICPD Programme of Action recognized the complex nature of population-environment interactions. Population growth was considered one of several causes of unsustainability. In addition, the Programme of Action recognized that valid, reliable, timely, culturally relevant and internationally comparable data form the basis for policy and programme development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The Plan of Action called for the establishment and maintenance of comprehensive databases, allowing linkages between population, education, health, poverty, family well-being, environment and development issues.

The 192 country profiles presented here are based on the Population, Resources, Environment and Development Database (PRED Bank, version 4), to which this volume is a companion. The profiles bring together data series dealing with a variety of aspects of population, labour force, economic growth, agriculture and natural resource use and their trends from 1970 to 2005. The profiles include data from the most recent United Nations population estimates and projections of population (the 2004 Revision) as well as other data maintained in the Population Division/DESA on migration, contraception, age at marriage and population policies. The profiles also include data on natural resources and economic and social development, taken primarily from other United Nations sources as updated in 2004 and 2005. An effort has been made to select reliable indicators that are comparable between countries and over time. However, despite the considerable efforts of national statistical offices and international organisations to collect, process and disseminate social and economic statistics and to standardize definitions and data collection methods, limitations remain in the data coverage, consistency and comparability of data across time and between countries. It should be noted that, for most of the indicators appearing in the country profiles, more information about the data and, often, related indicators can be found by consulting the original data sources, which are given in Chapter I and in the reference list at the end of the volume.

Chapter I.A. lists the variables included in the profiles, while chapter I.B. gives a more detailed description of each variable and a reference to the data sources. Chapter II provides an explanation of the radar graphs included with each country profile. The profiles, in Chapter III, are arranged in alphabetical order by country name. Profiles are provided for countries with a population of at least 100,000 in 2005. A list of references and data sources as well as an order form for the PRED Bank database are included at the end of the publication.