

As written

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**STATEMENT TO THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON POPULATION GROWTH,
STRUCTURE AND DISTRIBUTION**

**AGENDA ITEM 3. FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

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Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for this opportunity to introduce document E/CN.9/1999/2, the Concise Report on World Population Monitoring, focussing on the theme of "population growth, structure and distribution". The Concise Report summarizes a much larger report which has also been provided to the Commission. For those of you who do not have a copy of the full report, it is available at the conference room distribution window under the symbol ESA/WP/147.

The theme of this year's Report is particularly broad, covering a wide range of population issues. The Report reviews the changes in population size and growth in the world, and its urban and rural areas; the changes in mortality, fertility and migration which underlie these changes; and the policies that Governments have adopted in response to their concerns about population and development. The *Monitoring Report* concludes with a review of the state of knowledge on the interrelationships between population and aspects of development.

Understanding demographic change and its interrelationships with development needs to be based on timely and high-quality data. An annex to the

Report summarizes the state of data collection around the world and stresses that more Government commitment, particularly more resources for data collection and analysis, are needed to ensure that policies and programmes are effectively targeted, devised, and reliably monitored. We wish to thank the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for having prepared this annex.

Population censuses remain the most important source of key information at all geographic levels for the planning and implementing of development programmes. In this context, I recall to Members of the Commission, ECOSOC resolution 1998/7 on the importance of population census activities for evaluation of progress in implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

Mr. Chairman. In the quarter-century since the 1974 World Population Conference in Bucharest, the population situation of the world has undergone striking changes. World population size has increased from 4 billion persons to nearly six billion today. At the same time, the world population growth rate has fallen from around 2 per cent per year in the 1970s to 1.3 per cent today, average number of children per couple has fallen from 4.5 to 2.7 and life expectancy at birth has risen from 56 years to 65 years. The share of the world's population living in urban areas has increased from 36 per cent to 47 per cent and the number of megacities of 10 million persons or more has multiplied from 5 to 18. The number of persons who have moved to another country has risen to over 125 million today.

Continued high rates of population growth remain an issue of policy concern for many countries of the world. In addition, in response to low levels of fertility in a growing number of countries, and the social and economic consequences of the resultant population ageing, more countries are expressing concern about their low rates of population growth.

In the less developed regions, couples are currently having about two children less than couples did three decades ago. Even though fertility has

declined to relatively moderate levels in many developing countries, and to below replacement level in some, a large and growing number of births are occurring annually, due to the continued growth in the number of women of childbearing age; a legacy of past high fertility levels.

In the more developed regions, fertility declined from 2.1 births per woman during 1970- 1975 to an historic low of 1.6 for the current period. In Europe, Northern America and Japan, the current fertility rate is 1.5 births per woman or below. In the Russian Federation, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Slovenia and Latvia, the average total fertility rate is 1.3 births per woman. And in Bulgaria, Italy, the Czech Republic, Romania and Spain, the total fertility rate is even lower, at 1.2 births per woman.

Mr. Chairman. In spite of the impressive gains in health and life expectancy that the world has exhibited during the past decades, much remains to be done. Globally, infectious and parasitic diseases, respiratory infections, malnutrition, maternal mortality, and neonatal mortality account for more than 40 per cent of all deaths. Recent years has shown a devastating toll from AIDS in a number of countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, in some countries of Eastern Europe, the health situation has been deteriorating and life expectancies are declining.

Mr. Chairman. The twentieth century has witnessed the growth of urban centres and the concentration of population in urban areas. Half of the world population is expected to be urban by 2006. Giant urban agglomerations are becoming both more numerous and larger in size. The largest cities in the world in 1998 were Tokyo, with a population of 28 million, Mexico City (18 million) and Sao Paulo (17 million). Nonetheless, half of the world urban population still lives in smaller cities with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants.

Another major transformation of the twentieth century has been population ageing . In 1998 there were 580 million persons aged 60 years or **over** in the world, comprising 10 per cent of the world population. By 2050, this figure will triple to nearly 2 billion older persons. This changing age structure will