

**Introduction of the Report on Methods of Work of the
Commission on Population and Development**
Item 6 of the Agenda

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Mr. Chairperson, distinguished delegates,

I will introduce document E/CN.9/2005/7 on Working Methods of the Commission on Population and Development.

The report on working methods of the Commission on Population and Development was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, in which the Assembly requested each functional commission to examine its methods of work in order to better pursue the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

The Commission on Population and Development has continually reviewed and revised its methods of work so as to fulfill its role as the central intergovernmental body responsible for follow-up to United Nations international conferences on population, including most recently the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly held in 1999.

The report documents changes in the periodicity and length of the meetings of the Commission, the most recent of which dates from 1995. It also reviews the changes in membership and composition of the Commission and in the terms of office of its members.

Bureau of the Commission

In addition, the report presents the changes that have occurred in the election and membership of the Bureau of the Commission. In 2004, the Commission adopted decision 2004/2 changing the timing of the election of its Bureau and calling for a strict geographical rotation of the Chair. Last week, ECOSOC adopted a decision making this change consistent with the rules of procedure and modifying the terms of office of members of the Commission as suggested in the report. During this, its 38th session, the Commission is expected to decide the order of rotation of the Chair of the Bureau.

Since 1997, with the authorization of the Commission, the Bureau has been holding one intersessional meeting per year to plan the next session of the Commission. A representative of the United Nations Population Fund attends the intersessional meetings of the Bureau. Starting with the thirty-first session of the Commission in 1998, the report of the intersessional meeting of the Bureau has been introduced to the Commission by the outgoing Chair.

Over the years, the Bureau has initiated modifications in the working methods of the Commission with a view at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Commission's review of the follow-up and implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The Commission may wish to reaffirm the role of the Bureau in organizing the work of the Commission, making proposals for its work programme, suggesting improvements to its methods of work, and guiding collaboration and coordination with other Commissions and with the Economic and Social Council.

Multi-year work programme

Regarding its work programme, in 1995, the Commission recommended a multi-year work programme for the period 1996 to 1999, which was endorsed by the Economic and Social Council (1995/55). In addition to setting the themes for each annual session of the Commission from 1996 to 1999, the Commission's first multi-year plan established that the Commission would consider the quinquennial review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action in 1999.

Since 1995, the Commission has been selecting themes for future sessions at least two years in advance of each session, but a five-year programme of work has not been adopted again. Only in 2000 did the Commission select themes for three future sessions. The Commission may want to set a strict planning horizon for a multi-year work plan and endorse the periodic review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The adoption of a multi-year work programme and the selection of special themes has been guided by the need to review the follow-up and implementation of the Programme of Action in a structured and comprehensive manner over a given period. Since 1996, the themes selected have covered the major topics contained in the Programme of Action and, after 1999, in the key actions for its further implementation. Although there is generally a good correspondence between the themes selected and particular chapters of the Programme of Action, themes have often implied a clustering of topics treated in different chapters of the Programme of Action or the key actions. However, such clustering has been driven by the selection of a relevant and timely theme and not by the intent of focusing on the clusters per se. In this regard, the Commission has been giving priority to the consideration of key or emerging issues in the field of population and development rather than to the more mechanical coverage of all issues covered in the Programme of Action. The Commission may want to reconsider this practice and opt again for the comprehensive review of the Programme of Action through a multi-year work plan organized in terms of thematic clusters.

In 1995, the Commission requested that, in addition to the world population monitoring report focusing on the special theme, two other reports be presented under the item on follow-up actions to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development, namely, a report on programmes on the special theme and a report on the flow of financial resources assisting in the implementation of the Programme of Action, both of which are prepared and introduced by the United Nations Population Fund. This practice allows the Commission to carry out in a single session the review of both the substantive and programmatic aspects of each special theme.

Panel discussions and keynote speakers

Between 1998 and 2002, following a recommendation made by the Bureau at its intersessional meeting, the Commission heard panel discussions led by practitioners who presented in some depth the experience of their countries or regions in the implementation of the Programme of Action. It was found, however, that because of the length of the presentations, panel discussions did not lead to dialogue. For that reason, since 2003, panel discussions have been replaced by

keynote speakers. It has been found that single presentations by keynote speakers allow sufficient time for discussion. Outside experts of renown have been invited as keynote speakers. Presentations have been stimulating and have led to useful dialogues between the keynote speakers and members of the Commission. The Commission may want to endorse the use of keynote speakers.

Coordination with ECOSOC

Since 1999, members of the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development have been meeting regularly with members of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council during the annual session of the Commission. In addition, the Chair of the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development has been attending the annual meeting of chairpersons of the functional commissions with the Bureau of the Council, most recently held at United Nations headquarters on 16 July 2004. These meetings have been useful in providing a forum for the exchange of information and experience leading to increased collaboration and interaction between the functional commissions. The Commission may want to recognize the usefulness of these meetings.