



**United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa**

Statement

To

The Commission on Population and Development

Forty-Ninth Session

New York

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Madam Chair

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Guests and Colleagues

Thank you for affording the Economic Commission for Africa the opportunity to present to you the work on population and development that ECA does in Africa.

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) embraces the theme of the 49th session of the Commission on Population and Development, ***Strengthening the Demographic Evidence Base for the Post-2015 Development Agenda***. The theme has come at an appropriate time, soon after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the need to monitor these. Let me start by referring to publication edited by Herrmann (2015), *Consequential omissions: How demography shapes development-Lessons for the MDGs for the SDGs*. One of the important lessons noted in the book was that “ignoring demography has proved to be a consequential omission” of the MDGs. Reviewers of the publication reiterated the importance of demography in determining development efforts:

Clearly, it is essential that ongoing United Nations work on the post-2015 agenda should not neglect population dynamics and demographic data if they are to be fully effective (Thomas LeGrand)

Although significant progress has been made in Africa in improving data systems, the Secretary General’s report presented here clearly highlights areas of improvement in data generation, management and analyses in Africa. For example, 71 per cent of countries fail to report vital statistics, 9 countries have not had a census since 2005, and population registers are almost non-existent. ECA is committed, through the **Data Revolution** and **Big Data** strategies to improve data availability, accessibility, reliability and validity.

Madam Chair

Let me highlight the current and future work of ECA on population and development in Africa. Currently, the essential roadmap to the work of ECA is the ***Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014***, an outcome of the Africa Regional Conference on Population and Development co-hosted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Union

Commission (AUC) in September 2013. The Declaration consists of 88 commitments that set out concrete actions and Africa's priorities on population in the development agenda post 2015.

ECA upon the request of member states is developing *an Operational Guide* that will be used as an instrument that would offer member states clear and specific guidance for implementing and also serve as the means for monitoring the implementation of the Addis Ababa Declaration. In operationalizing the Addis Ababa Declaration, we will take into account some complementing instruments, for example, SDGs, Agenda 2063, and the African Youth Charter among others.

In recognition of the current and future population structure of Africa for the next fifty or so years, ECA is engaged with member states on how to harness the Demographic Dividend. In line with need for inclusiveness and leaving no-one behind, the ECA approach is to examine the Demographic Dividend in the context of Inequalities and Gender. ECA, in its efforts to demystify the concept of the Demographic Dividend, will approach it from a developmental perspective and as an entry point in addressing issues confronting the youth in Africa.

Related to the above, ECA has a Development Account on the Youth. The project being undertaken jointly with ESCAP and ESCWA aims to promote national youth policies and programmes that are inclusive and sustainable. The project will identify policy gaps and draw from good practices among member States in the ECA, ESCAP and ESCWA regions through regional analyses and capacity building workshops, as well as building on existing intra and interregional exchanges of policy and programme experiences. This information will be integrated into a Youth Policy Toolbox - an online platform developed under the Project for the purpose of knowledge exchange and engaging youth participation in the policy development process.

Migration is one of the major focus of ECA. We aim to construct a solid foundation for the response to migration issues based on evidence to develop appropriate policies and strategies in Africa region. ECA will support the creation and strengthening of knowledge frameworks to support and integrate the actions required to address migration issues across Africa and to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration with respect for human rights and human treatment of migrants regardless of their status.

ECA is working on Ageing. Africa's population is largely youthful, but it is also undergoing rapid demographic changes, and the proportion of older persons (60 years and above) has increased tremendously over the past few decades. The demographic changes are occurring at the same time as other equally significant economic and social transformations. Many of these changes raise concerns about a possible weakening of the traditional family, which, historically, has been the foundation of economic security for the older generation in Africa. In this respect, ECA will set up a High Level Panel on Migration, composed of eminent personalities from within and outside Africa who share a common concern and expertise on migration issues and it will be chaired by an ex-president, carefully identified because of their understanding of migration issues on the continent.

While I have highlighted the above programmes, ECA work is not limited to these. We have been looking and will continue to look at other issues, for example, Disability, Adolescent Fertility, the population-development nexus and others.

Madam Chair

Let me conclude by saying, ECA will continue providing the member states with high quality evidence on which to base their policies and plans. ECA endeavors to have policy influence in population and development issues and this will remain ECA's guiding principle. Using ECA comparative advantage as a think-tank on population and development issues in Africa, we will provide technical assistance to member states through ECA knowledge generation and knowledge delivery capacities. Let's recognize the potential of the African demographic transition. As most of the world ages, Africa has the youthful population. The future of world labour supply lies in Africa, where the largest proportion of the working age group will be.

ECA appeals for some coordinated efforts rather than fragmented projects to deal with population issues in Africa (Amazing the amount of duplication of efforts). ECA has a Population Section that has the capacity and ability to systematically coordinate population programmes in Africa.

Thank You