



MALDIVES

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49th Commission on Population and Development

Item 5- General Debate on the contribution of population and development issues to the Economic and Social Council theme in 2016, on

"Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to results"

Statement by:

His Excellency Mr Ahmed Sareer, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations

United Nations, New York, 12 April 2016

Thank you Madam Chair,

Allow me to offer my warmest congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the 49th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, and to the members of your Bureau. Let me also express gratitude to the Secretary General for the reports produced with regards to this mandate.

Madam Chair,

Last September, world leaders gathered here in New York and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: An Agenda of 17 goals and 169 targets which will lead to a more sustainable, efficient, kind and prosperous world. To ensure the effective implementation and achievement of the 2030 Agenda, countries will need to monitor the progress made, notably through the use of timely and reliable demographic data. The availability of this data will equip national governments with the relevant information to ensure appropriate actions are taken for the successful achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Madam Chair,

The Report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda and the resolution on this year's special theme emphasize the fact that demographic evidence will be essential for the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Both documents notably draw attention to the fact that demographic data is required to ensure "planning, monitoring and implementing actions to achieve the goals and targets of the

Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

Through the five core sources of demographic data: population censuses; population registration; civil registration and vital statistics; household surveys, as well as health and demographic surveillance”, it is shown that it is “crucial to foster and strengthen initiatives to compile, harmonize, consolidate, disseminate and analyze the data” to achieve the transformation we desire. To put it quite simply: without knowing where you are as a country, you wouldn’t know how to start; without knowing how changes affect the lives of people, you wouldn’t know whether changes have their desired effects.

Madam Chair,

The Maldives conducted its latest census in 2014 focusing on five key areas: population and households; migration; education; employment; and nuptiality and fertility. This census provided us with essential information on the progress we have made between 2006, year of the previous recorded census, and 2014, notably in the areas of population and growth and development; migration; nuptiality; employment; and the structure of families and households. The Maldives has a track record of formulating policies based on statistics since the turn of the century. The 2014 census was the most comprehensive census we have had so far. In fact, the first one where expatriates living in the country were included. The first one where data was completely disaggregated.

Despite our recent and regular censuses and the compulsory use of civil registration in all its forms – births, deaths, marriages and divorces - as they take place, the Maldives is yet to have the adequate resources to put in place and use household surveys as well as health and demographic surveillance. The Maldives lacks the necessary capacity to be able to put these elements into place. A diagnostic study done on the statistical capacity found that a major obstacle in the development of statistical knowledge is the lack of human capacity, due to high turnover in the Government. Institutional memory, and knowledge of specific cases is as much of an essential requirement as having the technical knowledge of concepts and theories. And for this reason, many problems and decisions can only be tackled by long term employees.

New technology and innovative approaches are also needed. Especially in a country where the population of 341,256 people, live on nearly 200 dispersed islands, with the capital Male’ housing about 35% of the population. There is a high cost associated with producing statistics in a country such as the Maldives, with an extremely small but highly dispersed population. And these challenges have only intensified with the new, universal Agenda that calls for more robust, disaggregated data, to be produced in all countries regardless of size.

Madam Chair,

Let us also highlight an additional concern. Global data and averages are based on aggregations of data and statistics at the national level. Due to our small size of our populations, the Maldives, along with other small island developing states, are often under-valued, or not included. Small island states are inadequately represented on a global scale when it comes to reporting, as our information is not

necessarily used or even relevant. Small Island Developing States experience difficulties and is at a disadvantage regarding standardized approaches of demographic data collection due to the limited capacities, and disproportionate costs associated with collecting statistics in our countries. Our systems are unable to cope with emerging internal and external demands for relevant, reliable and timely statistics for policy making, developing planning and project or program evaluation.

Madam Chair,

In this context, a key requirement to move “from commitment to results” for the 2030 Agenda, is a strong commitment to building national capacities in data collection and analysis.

Financial and Technical assistance is needed to ensure the successful implementation of the tools which are required to be able to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We therefore support the Secretary General Report’s emphasis on the importance of ICT, needing to be present at each stage of censuses, “including cartographic updates, logistics monitoring, questionnaire design, data collection, coding, storage, analysis and dissemination”. This therefore implies training of specific personnel and additional costs. These are matters which need to be addressed urgently.

We also support the work of the Statistical Commission in their capacity building efforts towards the 2030 Agenda, and efforts by other organisations to complement this common challenge. The 2030 Agenda provides an opportunity in this field, to improve our collective capacity in statistical and data capacity: and the Maldives intends to use it fully.

The Maldives is doing its part, focusing on establishing clear baselines and identifying where data exists and does not exist. We are making every effort to identify where challenges exist and seeking opportunities to address them. We stand ready to join efforts to collectively “transform the world” our present, and building a better, brighter future tomorrow.