



PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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PRESS RELEASE

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(Translation)

Statement by H.E. Mr. Jiang Fan
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Commission of China
for General Debate on National Experience
at the 40th Session of the
UN Commission on Population and Development

New York 10 April 2007

Mr. Chairman,

The Chinese delegation is delighted to have the opportunity to introduce to the respected representatives the changing age structure of China's population and its implication for development.

Over the past three decades, China has achieved two wonders, i.e., completed historic demographic transition and rapid economic development. Firstly, the population and family planning programme has achieved remarkable accomplishments. With the total fertility rate (TFR) declined from 5.8 in 1970 to 1.8 at present and over 400 million fewer births nationwide, the day when the China's population reached 1.3 billion arrived four years later than otherwise situated. In 1996, average life expectancy in China exceeded 70. At the beginning of the 21st century, China is already on the list of countries that feature low fertility rate, low population growth and high life expectancy. Secondary, over the past 20 years, China has been keeping its average economic growth

rate at 9.6% per annum and increased its economic aggregates by 11 times.

Socioeconomic changes and demographic transition in China have brought along major changes in China's population age structure, which are both similar to and different from those in many other countries. The similarity mainly lies in the fact that in China, like in many other countries, changes in age structure are the result of changed mortality rate and fertility rate. The distinctive Chinese feature is reflected in the dramatic nature of such changes and the irregular age structure as a joint consequence of age structure changes and other socioeconomic changes.

According to the 1% sample survey conducted by China's National Statistical Bureau on 1 November 2005, the population aged 65 and above in China reached 100.45 million, or 7.7% of the total population. Between 2000 and 2005, the China's population increased by 8.09 million per year on average, an average annual growth rate of 0.63%. The population aged 65 and above grows by 2.34 million per year or at an average annual growth rate of 2.64%. In another word, the increase rate of the aged population is much higher than that of the total population, or China's population structure is rapidly aging. After 2030, the China's population aged 65 and above will exceed the population aged between 0 and 14. Comparison with other countries indicates that China will host one of the fastest aging populations in the world.

The other distinctive feature of China's population age structure change is its remarkable "demographic dividend". Research indicates that 15% of rapid China's economic development over the recent two decades could be attributed to "demographic dividend". In 1990, working population aged between 15 and 64 took up 66.7% of the total population while total dependency ratio (TDR) reached 50%, which marked China's entry into the era of "demographic dividend". In 2000, the proportion of working population in China went up to 70.1%. It is expected that by 2020, this proportion will remain at around 70% while total dependency ratio will decline to 37-45%. The "demographic dividend" era will end by 2033 when the proportion of working-age population in China goes down to 66.3% and total dependency ratio rises to 50.9%. As such, the China's "demographic dividend" era will last over 40 years, with the use of a

lower than 50% total dependency ratio as the benchmark. Benefiting from a huge labor force and cheap labor, China will probably be able to maintain its rapid economic growth without facing the problem of labor shortage.

Mr. Chairman,

Although the rapid demographic transition has reduced the "population dependency ratio" and thereby created an extremely favorable population environment for capital accumulation and economic development in China, changes in the population age structure have also brought along enormous challenges to social and economic development. During the first half of the 21st century, China will embrace three population peaks, i.e. peak of total population, peak of working-age population and peak of aged population.

Changes in the China's population age structure still imply enormous population growth in the future. It is predicted that in the next dozen or so years, China's population will maintain its strong growth momentum with an annual net increase of 8-10 million population. In the next 25 years, China's population will grow by 10% or 135 million. In face with the large size of the working population, employment situation in China will face more severe challenges. In the continuing "demographic dividend" era of the next more than two decades, how to provide jobs to the growing huge working-age population will be a severe challenge to China's economic development. The higher than normal sex ratio at birth implies a potential risk to social stability. The increasingly growing migrant population constitutes a huge challenge to distribution of public resources. The diversifying poverty population structure renders promotion of balanced social development an arduous task.

China's population ageing trend constitutes another severe challenge and exerts unprecedented pressure on social security. China's population ageing features rapid speed, huge size and "aged before rich". Social security system for the elderly has not established in most of China's rural areas, and most of the elderly mainly depend on their families to support them. Despite the many efforts over the recent years to

establish and improve its social security system for the elderly, the Chinese government still has a long way to go in terms of mitigating the pressures and challenges of population aging in the foreseeable future. In addition, poverty of the elderly exists in both China's rural and urban areas, and it is particularly severe among the rural elderly. Hence, promotion of the social equity and eradication of poverty will be the main tasks and major goals for China's social development.

Mr. Chairman,

Population issues remain a significant constraint on China's attempt to achieve all-round, coordinated and sustainable development and a key factor impacting on its social and economic development. The Chinese government will prioritize investment in all-round human development, endeavor to achieve the conceptual transformation from exclusive quantitative control of population growth to comprehensive solution to population issues while maintaining low fertility level, enhance people's health and education, improve population structure, guide rational population distribution, ensure population security, promote the transformation of China from a populous country to a country competitive in human capital and facilitate coordinated and sustainable development between population on the one side, and economy, society, resources and environment on the other.

Thank You!