



HOLY SEE

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE UNITED NATIONS 25 EAST 39th STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10016-0903 (212) 370-7885

Check against delivery

**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore
Apostolic Nuncio
Permanent Observer of the Holy See**

**Economic and Social Council
40th session of the Commission on Population and Development**

**On Item 4:
The changing age structures of populations
and their implications for development**

New York, 10 April 2007

Mr Chairman,

Indicators continue to suggest that by 2050 the world's population should stabilize at about nine billion. Although this implies that national populations will not need to be regulated as proposed by radical opinion in the past, this Commission should continue to serve a useful purpose in monitoring the demographic trends in all parts of the world. In this regard, policy goals and the means to achieve them must remain sound and focused on the dignity of the human person.

This fortieth session of the Commission coincides with the fortieth anniversary of a document on population and development written by the late Pope Paul VI, known as *Populorum Progressio*, that is, *The Progress of Peoples*. At a time when the world was commonly divided into two blocs, East and West, the document focused instead on peoples and societies, whose conditions were marked not by being Eastern or Western, but by the levels of development and well-being in some parts of the world, in contrast to the degree of poverty and underdevelopment in others. The emphasis placed by the document on the individual and on societies, both as the primary focus of development policies and as protagonists of their own development, even today provides a sure guide for demographic policies to promote a culture respectful of the rights of the least-protected members of our human family, especially before birth and in extreme old age.

The reports made to the Commission this year suggest that dependency ratios are set to soar in some places, where an increasing number of elderly people will lay a heavier burden on the active population. It is dearly to be hoped that states will work to foster respect for human life in all its stages and to find solutions that are right and just, not merely pragmatic. Here in particular, promoting solidarity between generations will be very valuable.

While by 2050 Europe is set to have an elderly dependency ratio similar to that of Africa's in the 1960s, Africa is set to have the lowest dependency ratio in the world. This projection should hand that Continent an unprecedented advantage in economic terms, as a young and numerous workforce should be available to it until at least 2050, while the demographic dividend in most other regions will have run out. To assure that Africa will not miss this window of opportunity for economic development, it must be helped, inter

alia, to invest in its human capital and infrastructure to underpin economic growth. Because many of this future work force are already born and are already of school age, my delegation believes that the most decisive investment to be made here is in education. The UN Secretariat estimates that to achieve primary education for all by 2015 would cost nine billion dollars estimated in 1998 dollar value. By any estimate, this can hardly be considered a high price to pay for such a prize.

Moreover, education, especially for girls and young women, can have a notable impact on population growth. As women become better educated, they gain greater respect; they become breadwinners; they acquire maturity in parental responsibility and a greater say in family affairs. Investing in people in this way, especially in education, is surely to be preferred to legal imposition of limits, to artificial corrective measures and drastic policies, and to the unacceptable practice of eliminating fetuses, especially females, in order to limit population growth.

Finally, since this Commission's 39th session last year, important initiatives have been both completed and launched, in particular concerning migrants, a topic of no small importance in relation to the changing age structures of populations. My delegation regards last year's High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development as having been useful and welcomes the offer of Belgium and other countries to maintain its momentum in the form of the forthcoming Global Forum on Migration and Development. It is to be hoped that the Forum will build upon what was achieved during the High-level Dialogue. There is almost no country in the world untouched by migration and it has become an extremely important source both of labour and of remittances depending on each country's circumstances. Therefore, it is in the interests of all states - not to mention the migrants themselves - that the Forum be allowed room to succeed.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.