



# ITALY

*Statement by Professor  
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*for the General Debate on National Experience  
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UN Commission on Population and Development*

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**Check against delivery**

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development.

We align ourselves with the statement made by Germany on behalf of the EU on the theme "Changing age structure of policies and their implications for development" that we fully endorse.

It is likewise known that ageing is the positive result of two victories that humanity has sought for centuries and is still seeking: the victory over unwanted births and that over premature death.

Just because of the sharp, prolonged fall of fertility, and consequently of births, that has coincided with a sharp, prolonged rise in longevity, Italy has now become the, or one of the, "oldest" country in the World, recording among the highest proportion of population aged 65 or over, and the lowest proportion of people under age 15.

When the aging process is intensive and fast, there is a need to dynamically "restructure" the whole society in response to the sharp increase of the elderly. In Italy the debate and the responses to population aging are currently fully articulated.

1. The first response consists of an attempt to raise fertility among Italian women and couples, which is now very low and stable at around 1.3 children per woman and has been so, and even lower, for many years. Government policy is trying to remove all the elements penalizing women and couples who decide to have a child or one more child.
2. The second response is to accept immigration, which for Italy is advantageous and actually necessary from the economic and demographic point of view. And it is in any case the result of an unstoppable pressure, considering on one hand the extraordinary and in many cases growing population in countries of origin, especially in Africa, and on the other the vulnerability of our country's borders which provide access not only to Italy but also to the rest of the European Union.
3. The third response is to favor a complete re absorption of the high youth unemployment, especially considering a large decrease of the young segment of the working age population. However, in the long term, the last trend could prove to be a serious blow to the country's international competitiveness, unless the human capital of this young

population increases significantly. This is why a profound overhaul of the entire education and training system is under way.

4. The fourth response lies in optimizing the role of women in the labor market, especially since at present they are more likely than men to obtain a school or a university degree, and their participation in the labor market is increasing. In Italy, women, together with young people, undoubtedly represent the most important human capital resource, and their presences and skills are still underused.
5. The fifth response is related to the retirement age which, at least from a demographic perspective, must necessarily be raised above the present threshold, while providing for a gradual retirement process to take place between ages 60 and 65, or even more. Moreover there should be full compatibility between any type of further work and pension.
6. The sixth response, closely connected to some of the previous ones, involve an increase of work productivity and a growth of the entire Italian economy. Very recently the Governor of the Italian Central Bank attracted the attention of policy makers on the negative impact on GDP of aging of working age population and of possible decline of Italian population.
7. The seventh response lies in substantial, increasing social and health support by foreign care givers for the elderly who have physical and/or psychological and/or cognitive problems. We estimate that at present in Italy at least 800 hundred thousands of foreign care givers assist old Italian people with problems. But in the future, considering the growing burden on the adult members of the family and their reducing number, we have to push for voluntary social and health support by other wholly self-sufficient older people who will have to commit time and energy for the less fortunate.

To conclude, it must be stressed that the more complex and developed society and economy become, the more their growth and adaptation – harmonious, prompt and continuous – depends on a complex balance and interaction of factors and policies related to culture, education, politics (in the broad sense), and administration. The effort of Italian Government is toward this kind of adaptation.