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Agenda Item 6: Programme implementation and progress of  
work in the field of population

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Mr Chair,

First, we would like to commend the Population Division on its excellent work. Document E/CN.9/2013/6 refers to impressive efforts in many areas of high relevance to population and development.

We also welcome your new director.

The World Population Prospects are used by international and national institutions, as well as large numbers of individuals, all over the world. You virtually have a monopoly on global population projections, which underlines the importance of using sound methodology and making realistic assumptions about future trends.

The development of stochastic projections with confidence intervals is a welcome addition to your regular population prospects. We are interested in learning about your experience from this: Do users understand and use these concepts? How many of them are familiar with the Bayesian approach, for example? Do some find certain of the graphs on your webpages difficult to read, such as those showing the stochastic projections of fertility and life expectancy for individual countries?

We appreciate the fact that you are taking the uncertainty of future fertility and mortality into account. However, for many countries, including Norway, the greatest uncertainty about future population size and composition is due to migration. We would, therefore, be interested to hear if you plan to make projections that take the uncertainty of *migration* into account. Or perhaps that would entail such large confidence intervals that they cease to be meaningful.

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(Check against delivery)

We would very much like to learn more about how you project migration for each country. For Norway you project a significantly lower net immigration than Statistics Norway does in the medium series. For example, for the current five-year period, 2010–15, we project a net immigration of about 45 000 per year, whereas you assume only a third of this figure. In this connection we would like to know to what extent you take the economic prospects of countries of origin and destination into account.

A few years ago, Statistics Norway changed its approach to modelling migration flows, paying less attention to net migration and more to gross migration flows. We believe that this may give a more realistic picture of the migration process, since outmigration is strongly influenced by the migrant stock in a country. Besides, as far as we know nobody has ever seen a net migrant!

Finally, with respect to fertility, you assume that the total fertility rate in low-fertility countries will increase to the reproduction level of 2.1. Although there has been some increase in certain European and other countries in recent years, we believe that there is still a long way to go before the level of 2.1 children per woman is reached in most countries. We also question the assumption that European women on average will have more than 2 children each for most of the remaining part of this century. In the Nordic countries, which have some of the highest fertility levels among developed countries, the level has in fact declined in the last 2–3 years.

Let me finish by again complimenting the Population Division for the excellent job it does, given its limited resources and the high demand for publications, data and input for meetings such as the current session of the CPD.

Thank you.