



Permanente Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

Statement at the 49th Session of the

Commission on Population and Development

“Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post 2015 development agenda”.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you and the other bureau members for the exemplary way in which you are coordinating the 49th Session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Last year, we all agreed on an ambitious development agenda which offers a broad set of goals and targets centered on our people and the world that we are living in.

And this year, we are moving towards its next step, which is the implementation of our strategies to reach towards completing these goals and targets within the next 15 years.

Mr. Chairman,

In our quest for implementing our strategies, one fundamental aspect that directly relates to the successful implementation comes to the forefront. That is the monitoring and evaluation of implementation. The monitoring and evaluation of implementation of SDGs cannot be done without having reliable data on the evolving socio-economic situation on the ground. This is why Goal 17 of the SDGs calls for “high-quality, timely and reliable data”

Socio-economic data or Demographic data lie at the heart of the monitoring and evaluation of any development agenda.

Therefore, I would concur with all the previous speakers, who stressed the importance of strengthening the demographic evidence base as one of the cornerstones in the whole process of fulfilling the SDGs.

Mr. Chairman,

The most commonly used and traditional method in collecting demographic data is by way of conducting a census.

In Sri Lanka collecting census data dates back to the late 19th century. This made Sri Lanka the first country to have a demographic evidence base among all SAARC countries. The last Census of Population and Housing was completed in the year 2012. This was the first time that a census was carried out covering the entire country after 31 years.

This census provided us with some of the vital socio economic data necessary to understand the current status of the country. We learned that the population itself has grown 8 folds since 1871, which is now at 20,359,439 and growing.

The Population growth rates showed a clear decline since 1953 and remains at an average annual growth rate of 1.1 percent during the 1981-2012 period. It is projected that by 2041 the total population in Sri Lanka would be 21.7 million people. We also realized that in the Sri Lankan population, females outnumbered males by 646,000.

However, one of the most important factor that we realized after analyzing these data is that currently Sri Lanka is undergoing a period of demographic dividend, where the bulk of the population is well within the working population. This would last for another 25 years. This is one of the key considerations, in planning our roadmap towards implementing the SGDs.

Mr. Chairman,

We have noted that new data sources are becoming increasingly available for more rapid and more localized monitoring and these new sources can complement more traditional data sources. In Sri Lanka, the 'e - Census' technology was introduced for the first time in the 2012 Census to collect household information.

We may also need to explore the possibilities for the integration of multiple data sources available at different geographical scales and time periods.

Demographic evidence from civil registration and vital statistics systems, health information systems and other administrative data sources, including insights provided by health and demographic surveillance sites is important in this regard.

However, we need to be cognizant that in this process of strengthening the demographic evidence base we also need to carefully look into some other aspects such as governance, protection of privacy, transparency and data rights.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.