



**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

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**Population and Social Development Section**

**Social Development Division**

**Commission on Population and Development**

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Madam Chair, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), I thank you for the opportunity to address this audience. ESCWA welcomes the topic of the fiftieth session of the Commission on Population and Development for its high relevance to its 18 member States.

The Arab region has witnessed significant demographic changes over the past four decades. It has experienced considerable decrease in mortality and a net improvement in life expectancy. Simultaneously, fertility rates have decreased at a slower pace in the region. These changes have resulted in a youth bulge, a growing working age population, and an increasing size of older population in several countries.

Human movements namely rapid urbanization, international migration and forced displacement are also shaping the Arab countries' population structure. These developments provide opportunities for reaping the demographic dividend that many countries of the region can benefit from if they address the differentiated needs of various population groups.

Generally, poverty rates have increased, employment rate is the highest in the world and conflict has driven 30 million people from their homes. In such a challenging context, concerns arise about the efforts and investments that are, and can be, allocated to the issues pertaining to each of the population groups.

However, the issues faced by several age groups differ considerably, and so do their needs. Differences in needs translate into types of services required and thus on the kind of resources and efforts to be invested. Numerous needs are to be addressed simultaneously so that no one is left behind and so all individuals can fulfil their potential. Any approach that would consider those needs as conflictual is very likely to lead to pessimistic scenarios.

Well aware of the situation and related challenges, the Arab countries met in Cairo in 2013 to renew their commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development and pledged to enhance their response to fast changing demographic, social, economic and political realities. In 2015, the Arab States endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, echoing the ICPD Programme of Action, and committing to leave no one behind.

To better support its member States adapt their policies to the new realities, ESCWA has aligned its work to ensure that member States have access to knowledge and capacity building programmes tailored to their needs. Through regional and national level work, ESCWA takes an active role in advancing key population priority issues in a participatory approach that ensures the knowledge and expertise of all stakeholders are made available. ESCWA invests in producing and filling knowledge gaps particularly in light of the fast changes, at all levels, continuously occurring in the region. Through its convening power, ESCWA contributes to support debates and consensus building around the key regional challenges.

Going forward, ESCWA plans to continue to advocate for development policy-making that takes into account population dynamics and their foreseen changes

from an integrated human-rights based approach taking into consideration the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It also continues to promote the integration of population issues into development planning, which would allow countries to identify and design interventions that maximize synergies and impact on various groups.

ESCWA thus stands ready to engage with its regional partners (including the League of Arab States and UNFPA) to address key population priorities and develop a regional framework and mechanisms to review progress of Arab countries in implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration as part of a broader follow-up and review framework for the 2030 Agenda

Thank you.