



# Commission on Population and Development

Fifty-fourth session  
New York, 19-23 April 2021

EXPERT PANEL ON POPULATION,  
FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION AND  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
(virtual meeting)

Wednesday, 21 April 2021  
10:00-11:30 am EDT

## CONCEPT NOTE

### Introduction

The Commission on Population and Development, at its fifty-fourth session, will consider the special theme of “Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development”.<sup>1</sup>

The expert panel will discuss linkages between population trends and policies, food security, nutrition, and sustainable development. Panel members will include experts from academia, civil society and the private sector. The panel will inform the deliberations under item 3 of the draft agenda (General debate).<sup>2</sup>

### Background

The Commission on Population and Development monitors, reviews and assesses the implementation of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The Programme of Action highlights the interlinkages between that population, poverty, patterns of production and consumption and the environment. The Commission also contributes to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Food and agricultural systems are affected by the continued growth of the human population and personal income, and by the associated expansion of food production and consumption – trends that may jeopardize the future sustainability of such systems. In addition, the shift towards more capital-intensive forms of agriculture is driving a transformation of rural economies and societies, contributing to the growth of cities and intensifying pressures for migration. Challenges to food security include climate change, armed conflict, economic downturns and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the Programme of Action highlighted problems of undernutrition, today’s discussion of malnutrition is broader and includes stunting, wasting, overweight and obesity, as well as micronutrient deficiencies. In many settings, there is now a double or triple burden of malnutrition, as multiple forms of malnutrition coexist within countries, communities, households and even individuals. Interventions for maternal and child nutrition are well established, and barriers to implementation must be overcome, while the rising crisis of obesity and overweight requires new research on effective interventions. Nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable dietary choices are influenced by factors in food supply value

<sup>1</sup> For further information on the annual session, including the reports of the Secretary-General, please refer to <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/events/CPD54>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://undocs.org/en/E/CN.9/2021/1>

chains, external and personal food environments, and consumer behaviour. These are compounded by poverty and social inequities constraining individuals' ability to choose healthy diets for themselves and their families.

Achieving sustainable food systems and ending hunger, while achieving improved nutrition and ensuring healthy lives for all, will require transformative action by all stakeholders and consideration of possible trade-offs among the various development objectives.

### **Format**

Following opening remarks by the moderator, panelists will be invited to address the guiding questions (see below). Following these interventions, Member States, observers and civil society are encouraged to ask questions or raise issues in response to the interventions made. Reading from prepared statements is discouraged. The panelists will respond to the questions and issues raised by the audience, after which the moderator will make brief closing remarks.

### **Indicative guiding questions for the panelists**

- What are the impacts of population growth and other factors such as rising levels of income, economic downturns, the COVID-19 pandemic and changing patterns of food production and consumption on food security?
- How do other demographic megatrends, including population ageing, urbanization and international migration interact with issues of food security and nutrition?
- How can implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action contribute to ending hunger, achieving SDG targets on food security and nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture?
- What are the interrelationships between climate change, food security and the environmental sustainability of food systems?
- How can food systems be harnessed for nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets to address malnutrition in all its forms in order to achieve the SDGs?
- In this decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, what policies, programmes and interventions are needed to accelerate action to achieve food security and to promote and support healthy diets for pregnant women, newborns, children and adolescents?
- What areas of research need to be prioritized to fill knowledge gaps that could accelerate action on food security and nutrition?

### **Outcome**

The discussion will be summarized in the report of the Commission on its fifty-fourth session, which will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council shortly after the session. It will also inform the Commission's contribution to the 2021 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

