

Introductory remarks by H.E. Ambassador Enrique A. Manalo

Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations and  
Chair of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Population and Development

Madam Deputy Secretary General,

Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Mr. Liu Zhenmin,  
UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem,  
UNCTAD Secretary-General Ms. Rebeca Grynspan,

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The special theme of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Population and Development is *Population and sustainable development, in particular sustained and inclusive economic growth*.

This theme is closely related to Chapter III of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, which emphasizes the need to integrate population considerations in development strategies.

That chapter highlights the connections between population, sustained economic growth and poverty on the one hand, and between population and the environment on the other. It emphasizes that efforts to slow down population growth, to reduce poverty, to achieve economic progress, to improve environmental protection, and to reduce unsustainable consumption and production patterns are mutually reinforcing.

These insights remain as relevant today as they were 28 years ago.

For example, as you know, ending poverty in all its forms everywhere is the first of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. And today, poverty and other forms of inequality are receiving renewed attention in the light of the global health crisis and economic downturns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, other parts of the 2030 Agenda focus on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, considering their impacts on environmental degradation and climate change.

While these problems are not driven primarily by human population increase, all of them are compounded, and made more difficult to address, by continuing population growth.

It is therefore encouraging that the growth of the global population continues to slow down thanks to reductions in fertility worldwide. This creates a window of opportunity for accelerated economic growth, often referred to as the demographic dividend.

Unfortunately, higher standards of living often bring increased risks of environmental degradation. Advanced economies depend on energy obtained from the burning of fossil fuels, whose associated emissions are the main drivers of climate change, which is creating new risks for human well-being.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In 2021, after several years of stalemate, the Commission was able to reach consensus around a resolution on the special theme of the session, demonstrating the Commission's continued relevance and providing an important contribution to the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development.

As Chair, my approach from the start has been to build on the success of last year's session.

I am grateful that delegations have already reached consensus on the three draft decisions the Bureau had put forward.

I remain hopeful that delegations will soon reach consensus on the draft resolution on the special theme.

Soon, our planet will welcome its 8 billionth inhabitant.

And soon, we will start our preparations for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Let us demonstrate the continued relevance of this Commission.

Let us focus on what we have in common rather than what divides us.

Dear colleagues,

The Bureau has worked hard to prepare an informative, substantive session. We have invited stimulating speakers. We have organized interesting expert and multi-stakeholder panels.

In response to GA resolution 75/290A, the panel on Tuesday morning will examine the contribution of key population and development issues to the main theme of the Economic and Social Council in its current session.

We look forward to a stimulating week and to the substantive discussions that will enrich our deliberations.

In closing, let me express my deep appreciation for the support of my fellow Bureau members and for the collaborative spirit in which we have prepared this session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Let me also thank our colleagues in DESA, in DGACM and in UNFPA for the unfailing support that they have provided to the Bureau in organizing the annual session.