



CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction and objectives

The special theme of the 56th session of the Commission on Population and Development is “Population, education and sustainable development”. The theme is related to chapter XI of the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, Egypt, September 1994) and to the 2030 Agenda SDG4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Since the founding of the United Nations, education has been recognized as one of the essential underpinnings of human development and societal progress. The right to education and to participation in cultural life are proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The upcoming Transforming Education Summit will be convened in September 2022 to mobilize greater political ambition, commitment, and action to reverse the slide on SDG4, reimagine education, and accelerate progress on education-related SDGs for the remainder of the Decade of Action.

The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) includes calls for achieving universal access to primary education and eliminating the gender gap in primary and secondary education. It requests governments to expand youth and adult education and lifelong learning programmes, with particular attention to migrants, indigenous people and people with disabilities. The Programme of Action also calls upon Governments to provide formal and informal education on population and health issues, including sexual and reproductive health in order to promote the well-being of adolescents. The text acknowledged that this type of education helps to enhance gender equality and equity, responsible sexual behaviour and to protect adolescents from early and unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and sexual abuse and violence. The Programme of Action also recognized the need to ensure access to and use of modern communication technology and to address the barriers to education in developing countries, especially in the least developed countries, with assistance from the international community.

As part of the substantive preparations of the 56th session of the Commission on Population and Development, the Population Division of UN DESA will convene an expert group meeting on the special theme ***Population, education and sustainable development*** to be held on 6 and 7 September 2022. The meeting will review the latest evidence and analysis of the theme, drawing from the experiences of countries in all regions of the world.

Mandate

The mandate of the Commission on Population and Development, as reaffirmed in 2016, is to monitor, review and assess the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Within that mandate, the Commission contributes also to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their interlinkages. Each year, the Commission negotiates a resolution on the special theme.

Key topics to be covered in the meeting

Key topics to be addressed in the expert meeting would be:

- Current and future trends in the school-age population by level, gender and place of residence.
- Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on school enrolment, attendance and learning: short and medium-term implications
- Lifelong learning and education in the context of information technologies
- Linkages between education and reproductive decision making and fertility, including entry into reproductive life, age at marriage and age at first birth.
- Comprehensive sexuality education, child and maternal health and fertility outcomes.
- Education, urbanization and international migration.
- Financing for education and human capital over the course of the demographic transition.

Format of the meeting

The meeting will be held virtually on the Zoom platform. To accommodate participants from a range of time zones, four-hour sessions will be held during morning and afternoon New York times over two days.

Invited experts will be asked to make a brief presentation on an assigned aspect of the theme, and to provide written summary notes (of approximately 1,000 words) that will also serve as an input to the meeting report. The written notes should include key evidence, analysis and policy implications of the designated topic that may be useful for the review and assessment of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and its contribution to achieving the SDGs.

Outcome of the meeting

The expert meeting is expected to provide up-to-date evidence, analysis and substantive inputs for the preparation of the reports of the Secretary-General on the special theme of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Population and Development (April, 2023).

The Population Division will prepare a brief report of the meeting, summarizing the discussions and recommendations. With the permission of participants, their presentations will be posted on the website of the meeting.