



**THE UNDER SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLICY**

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**REMARKS AT THE 58TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON  
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**7 April 2025**

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

Thank you for your invitation to address the Commission at the opening of its 58th session.

I am pleased to convey the warmest wishes of the Secretary-General who I am honoured to represent here today.

That this session begins on World Health Day is particularly fitting.

In the coming days, you will consider a critical topic: ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all.

Health for all is a central aspiration of the United Nations – enshrined in the Constitution of the World Health Organization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and recently reaffirmed by Member States in the Pact for the Future.

It is also a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda and a precondition for achieving nearly all Sustainable Development Goals.

Health is, in essence, the foundation of social and economic progress.

In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development affirmed the right of all people to physical and mental health.

The ICPD called for affordable, accessible essential healthcare services for all – including sexual and reproductive health.

Its Programme of Action remains a guiding framework that continues to shape global health policies worldwide.

Over the past decades, we have achieved real progress.

Since 2000, life expectancy has increased by 10 years in Africa and 9 years in South Asia.

Child mortality has dropped by more than half.

Cases of HIV have declined by 50 per cent.

Tobacco use and road traffic deaths have significantly declined...

These gains demonstrate what is possible with sustained political will and investment.

But progress has been uneven – and we remain far from meeting many health-related targets of the 2030 Agenda.

Persistent underinvestment in simple, cost-effective interventions – including for sexual and reproductive health – results in preventable suffering and deaths.

Just this morning, WHO and partners released new global estimates of maternal mortality for 2023.

The report shows renewed progress in some regions but worrying stagnation in others.

Meanwhile, the rise of non-communicable diseases and the escalating burden of mental health conditions underline the need for accelerated action toward universal health – rooted in robust primary healthcare systems.

Yet, domestic funding for health remains critically insufficient in many low- and lower-middle-income countries.

And international assistance continues to fall short – as conflicts divert scarce resources and undermine hard-won health gains.

Bringing Sustainable Development Goal 3 back on track requires a renewed global commitment to support developing countries in building equitable, sustainable and resilient health systems and expand access to essential care for their people.

Accelerating progress on universal health coverage will also reduce catastrophic health spending, preventing millions of people from falling into poverty.

Excellencies,

Health is one of the smartest investments we can make for a more sustainable, prosperous and peaceful future.

The COVID-19 pandemic, humanitarian crises and climate hazards have exposed the fragility of our global health systems.

Yet health-related targets – including universal health coverage – remain within reach, promising long-lasting returns for well-being and economic growth.

We must recommit to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages by 2030.

This requires strong, resilient health systems.

It requires investing in the health workforce.

It requires closing the gaps on financing for development – so that countries can invest in their people, and an international financial system that can make global solidarity a reality.

Finally, harnessing data and technology will improve service delivery, strengthen disease monitoring, and shape people-centered policy decisions.

Dear friends,

Your continued leadership in fulfilling these objectives will be invaluable.

An action-oriented outcome from this Commission will galvanize progress towards full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the SDGs.

In that spirit, I wish you a successful session.

Thank you.