



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

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STATEMENT

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ON AGENDA ITEM 4 "GENERAL DEBATE ON NATIONAL
EXPERIENCE IN POPULATION MATTERS: POPULATION
DISTRIBUTION, URBANIZATION, INTERNAL MIGRATION AND
DEVELOPMENT"

41ST SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you and the other members of the bureau for your election and for the work you have done so far for organizing this session. The theme of the CPD 41st session is important not only because it considers the processes of urbanization, internal migration and distribution of population and their impact on the demographic trends, but also because it gives us the opportunity to discuss the interrelations of these processes with the social and economic developments in the world, the challenges they pose in relation to climate change. All those issues should be examined in their complexity.

As the Secretary-general states in his report "Monitoring of population programmes, focusing on population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development" the process of urbanization is inevitable. More than half of the world's population live today in the cities and the number of the urban population continues to increase. This makes us responsible for the proper management of these processes. A more holistic approach should be applied to local, national as well as regional territorial development. The management of land use is of great importance. This requires legal instruments to insure access to land and sound planning techniques for urban development, including infrastructure. The local authorities should be capable of preparing a coherent city master plan, mobilizing private investments both for housing and for urban facilities and services. The role of the state is also important. It is its task to ensure the solidarity between territorial areas, cities and population and lay the foundations of the partnership between the state and local authorities, to outline and coordinate the implementation of national and local sectoral policies. In this regard we support the idea of the SG expressed in his report to incorporate the processes of urbanization and internal migration in the national development frameworks and poverty reduction strategies.

Mr. Chairman,

For the last 20 years my country was facing serious demographic problems. The population is constantly decreasing mainly due to the ever lower levels of birth rate, aging of the population and wide migration flows. The low birth rate, the increased mortality rate as well as the migration processes in the years between 1990-2004 led to changes in the territorial distribution of the population. The urbanization process which led to a rise in the percentage of urban population, resulted in a growth from 67,1% in 1990 to 70% in 2004. The territorial redistribution of the population taking place in Bulgaria now is an indicator of the deepening differences between the living conditions in cities and villages. It was clear that the absence of any active investment policy will intensify these differences. Unfortunately this negative impact of the urbanization in number of areas such as demographic, economic and social ones which has been neglected so far is one of the main causes for Bulgaria's demographic crises. The depopulation process in the villages which is strongest in the border regions will create a serious problem for Bulgaria's economic development.

With regard to the sustainable development the social demographic processes in Bulgarian villages are characterized by various problems. One of them is the clear trend of population aging. In 2002 every fourth rural inhabitant was over 65. The rural population's level of education is much lower than that of the urban. This trend remains. The 2001 census data show that only 69.1% of the rural children completed primary school compared to 89.7% for the urban children. The existing condition of the Bulgarian villages requires alternative employment possibilities based on natural resources, tourism and local services. Further options could be provided through better access to jobs in neighboring towns giving the opportunity for the population to remain in the villages and at the same time making the rural areas attractive option for living and working.

The effect of the existing migration processes in my country is predominantly negative – the population is concentrated in a small number of settlements while at the end of 2004 144 settlements became depopulated, a lot of them entirely without inhabitants. This trend results in the country's unbalanced demographic and economic development which will certainly lead to major problems that we would face in the near future.

In order to overcome the territorial imbalance I will present to your attention the tasks we foresee to implement as they are formulated in our national demographic strategy:

- reducing the regional disproportions by decentralization and creation of regional capacity for dynamic economic development;
- mobilizing the regional and local institutional capacities and resources in the realization of the regional development policy;
- rational distribution of local infrastructures and services for ensuring balanced growth of the regions;
- conducting differentiated regional policy in the underdeveloped regions;
- elaborating an integral program of economic and social development of the border line and semi-mountainous regions;
- developing sustainable, dynamic and united city centers;
- optimizing the concentration of the population in the big cities and the capital;
- elaborating a program for solving the problem of "ghettoization" through urban planning in the neighborhoods with concentrated poverty ;
- sustainable improving of the housing for the Roma population in Bulgaria;
- encouraging employment and investments in the rural areas;
- preserving and maintaining an ecological and ergonomic living environment.

Mr. Chairman,

As a member of the European Union from 1 January 2007 Bulgaria has taken advantage of the funding opportunities presented by various programs of the Union, among which I would particularly mention in the context of our current discussion the Program on Regional and Rural Development. Within the framework of this program my country currently implements measures aiming at sustainable development in the rural areas of Bulgaria.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the end to use this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the UNFPA for their help in elaborating the National demographic strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2020, as well as for their assistance in conducting a survey on the family models in Bulgaria, the results of which will be presented during the UNFPA-UN HABITAT side event later today.

Thank you!