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Commission on Population and Development Forty first session
Agenda Item 4: General Debate on national experience in population matters: population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development.

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# STATEMENT

by

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Secretary General Governmental Population Council

**Poland** 

New York, 8 April, 2008

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate you on organizing the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development devoted to population growth and distribution, urbanization, internal migration, and development.

Poland is a European country of a substantial demographic potential. Dynamics of natural and real population growth, however diminishing over the last decades, has always been high. Family formation patterns, reproductive attitudes and behaviours have changed, life span has extended, a decline in fertility has resulted in an accelerated ageing of the society. The nature of these changes confirms that the demographic transformation is an advanced process.

As regards the demographic transformation, experienced by Poland, the following phenomena deserve special attention:

- · Replacement of generations has already been narrowed down;
- Ageing process has accelerated;
- Decline in the death risk among adult and the elderly populations is observed.

Demographic processes are of fundamental importance for outlining the long-term strategy of development of our country.

#### Mr Chairman,

As regards the number of population, Poland occupies the thirtieth position among the countries of the world and the ninth position in Europe.

The process of intensive demographic changes in Poland is being monitored. These changes were initiated at the beginning of the socio-economic transformation. Since then Poland has become an attractive country to settle in. Over the past decade we experienced a significantly increased inflow of population from other countries. However, the tendency to emigrate is still strong. The permanent emigration level increased almost twofold in 2006 in comparison to the previous year, exceeding the level of 10 000 persons. It led to an increase of the negative balance due to emigration in relation to the previous year, reaching the level of 36 100 persons in 2006.

The scale of temporary emigration is of much higher importance in this respect. It is estimated by the CSO at almost 2 million persons (1 950 000 at the end of 2006). It has many consequences not only demographic, but also economic and social ones. The necessity to analyse the phenomenon of international migration in Poland ensues from both Poland's accession to the European Union as well as the process of globalization.

Also in 2006 a stagnant trend of internal migration volumes was observed but still the number of people changing place of residence amounted to 473 600 and was higher by 40 000 than in the previous year.

Since the beginning of the decade a negative net-migration for rural areas has reversed completely into a positive balance and it also grew considerably to disfavour urban areas.

An analysis of absolute and relative volumes of internal and international migrations is of great importance for an assessment of the changes of demographic situation, both on the national level and for the regions, in particular in a period of social and economic transformation. In Poland in 1990-2006 such transformation was additionally enhanced by the program of economy restructuring and modernisation. The processes that occurred as a result of Poland's accession to the European Union, especially due to opening of labour markets for Poles in most the EU countries, are concurrent with these phenomena.

### Distinguished Delegates,

Regional differentiation of demographic processes in Poland is still a factor shaping different dynamics of population and changes in age structure in rural areas, in urban agglomerations and in regional cross-section. A significant dispersion is characteristic for a settlement network in Poland: there are as many as 889 towns and almost 43 000 villages. In 2006 61.3% of the country's population lived in urban areas, and 38.7% - in rural areas. Territorial distribution of the decrease or increase in population was not even.

One can observe three major types of the changes in population density: a) concentration of population in metropolitan areas and in urban agglomerations, b) de-concentration within metropolitan areas and urban

agglomerations, c) depopulation of peripheral rural areas. The phenomenon of urban sprawl should also be included among these features.

A spatial differentiation of the urban population growth, as well as a decline of the rural population was not taking place at the same time. The results of our research revealed 3 types of population change: active areas (increase in population), stable areas (stagnation of population), and relatively depopulating ones (decrease in population). A considerable decrease in population was observed in rural areas with the old demographic structure of population.

#### Mr Chairman,

Urbanization is one of the most characteristic social and economic processes in Poland. After World War II, the most significant process was industrialization which had a very important role in the process of urbanization and gave the Polish cities a specific character. The social and spatial structure of the cities was changed to a considerable extent and the settlement system of the country was modified significantly as well.

The structure of the urban system in Poland is characterized by a high degree of polycentrism with a full hierarchical structure and a relatively regular spatial distribution. Another characteristic feature for polycentrism of the urban Polish system is a low degree of the capital city primacy—i.e. its domination in terms of size over other large cities. Polycentrism of the urban system is undoubtedly an advantage of Poland's spatial organization on the international scale.

Metropolitan areas, large cities and their multi-functional urban agglomerations quite efficiently adapt to the rules of the open market economy. The processes of metropolization of space, with suburbanization as one of their aspects, mean a progressing polarization within the settlement system.

The contemporary transformations of urban areas in Poland are related to the social and economic transformation, transformation to a market economy and to the effect of the processes associated with the European integration and globalization.

#### Mr Chairman,

A significant factor dynamising economic development in Poland was the integration with the European Union in May 2004. On the one hand the expected positive influence of the integration with the European Union on the Polish economy caused a rapid increase in entrepreneurial activities at the Polish market, on the other hand, adjustment of Polish law and liberalization of the foreign trade made Poland more attractive to foreign investors.

The economic revival, which has been maintained for a few years, contributed to a continued high economic growth. The high internal demand and increase in individual consumption had the most significant influence on GDP growth rate. According to provisional CSO estimates, in 2007, GDP growth reached a level of 6.5% and increase in consumption resulted mainly from improvement of situation in the labour market. In 2008, the economic growth should reach the level of 5.5%.

Poland is becoming more and more attractive to the foreign investors. This is proved by an increasing value of foreign direct investments. In 2006 Poland achieved position of the leader among the new members of European Union regarding foreign investments. Value of the investments in Poland in 2006 amounted to 15.2 billion EUR and in 2007, according to preliminary estimated data – 13.7 billion EUR.

High unemployment rate still creates problems in the Polish economy although the situation at the labour market has been improving significantly for 2 years. Taking into account the character of the Polish labour market – structure of the unemployment as well as a mismatch between demand and supply, the problem can though deepen.

Human resources will be the greatest advantage in the development of Poland in the next thirty years, and their distribution will be playing a decisive role in the regional structure of transformation, and as a consequence – in the changes of the spatial organization of the country.

Finally, let me add that a more detailed report: "National Report: Population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development Poland" has been made available in the room.

Thank you for your attention.