



CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction and objectives

The United Nations Commission on Population and Development (CPD) was to address the special theme “*Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development*” at its fifty-third session in 2020. In preparation for the session, the Population Division prepared the [report of the Secretary-General on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development](#), which was issued in February 2020¹. Due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Commission was not able to hold its formal session at the end of March 2020. The Commission decided to postpone a full consideration of the theme to its fifty-fourth session in 2021.

The report prepared for the 2020 session focused on four broad themes:

- Concepts, measures and state of food security and nutrition
- Nutrition, food security and population health, including diets, nutritional habits and burden of disease; hunger and undernutrition; and overweight and obesity
- Population growth, food consumption and sustainability
- Rural development, population movements and settlement patterns.

To inform preparation of an updated report of the Secretary-General for the 2021 session, the Population Division of UN DESA will convene an expert group meeting on the theme, to be held virtually from 28 to 30 October 2020. The expert group should advise on 1) *elements where new data or analysis has become available in 2020*; 2) *elements that should receive greater attention in the new report*; and 3) *evidence for impacts of COVID-19 in each area*.

Invited experts will be asked to make a brief presentation on an assigned aspect of the theme, and also to provide a written input to the meeting (approximately 1000 words) that will also serve as an input to the report.

¹ The report prepared by the Population Division each year gives a global overview of the theme. A companion report on programmes and interventions for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in the context of the special theme is prepared by UNFPA.

Mandate of the Commission

The mandate of the Commission, 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.

Current context

In March 2020, just days after the distribution of a draft resolution for the fifty-third session, COVID-19 drastically changed the world in a few short weeks. In light of the changing circumstances, the Chair withdrew the original draft resolution and circulated a short draft declaration on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Informal negotiations neared agreement on paragraphs related to food security, nutrition and the impacts of and response to the pandemic, but ultimately broke down over topics traditionally contentious in the CPD context².

The postponement of a full discussion of the theme to April 2021 means that preparations for the Commission will be happening in parallel to preparations for the Food Systems Summit. Furthermore, SDG2 to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, will be reviewed at the High-level Political Forum in 2021 together with other Goals. In this regard, it will be particularly timely and relevant to obtain views from experts and Member States as to how the Commission, within its mandate, can complement and can contribute to these processes.

Key questions to be covered in the meeting

1) Elements where new data or analysis has become available in 2020

- In addition to the updates of hunger, food insecurity, and selected nutrition indicators released in July 2020, what other relevant indicators have been or will be updated before the submission date of the report (mid-January 2021)?
- Should any other areas of the report be updated with newer data or analysis (as opposed to expanded, to be covered below)?
- While including new evidence from 2020 is important, the Commission will also be discussing the interrelationships between population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development more generally. How do we ensure the report supports the Commission's mandate to review and assess the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and its contribution to the SDGs?

2) Elements that should receive greater attention in the new report

The Population Division has identified several areas that may benefit from greater focus in the new report, including, but not limited to: regional/country dimensions; affordable healthy diets;

² See the [Report on the fifty-third session](#), p. 5, for a summary of the informal consultations.

inequalities, including a focus on the gender dimension; capital intensity of production and jobless transformation; decent employment and connections to urban and rural poverty; data, including big data; innovation and technology.

- What other topics may merit expanded discussion, keeping in mind the connections to population dimensions?

3) Evidence for impacts of COVID-19

- What concrete evidence do we have for impacts of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition?
- What areas are impacted: incomes, supply chains, programme delivery, other?
- Has COVID-19 changed earlier thinking on potential relationships between pandemics and food systems?
- Has COVID-19 shifted earlier thinking on broader questions of sustainable food systems?
- What are the relationships between poor nutrition/unhealthy diets and COVID-19 morbidity and mortality?

Format of the meeting

The meeting will be held virtually on the Microsoft Teams or Webex platform (TBC). To accommodate participants from a range of time zones, three-hour sessions will be held from 8:00am-11:00am, EDT over three days. The length of presentations will be limited to allow sufficient time for discussion, and written inputs will be encouraged.

Outcome of the meeting

The expert meeting is expected to provide substantive inputs and advice for the preparation of the reports of the Secretary-General on the special theme of the fifty-fourth session, as well as recommendations for key messages.

The Population Division will prepare a report to summarize the discussions and key conclusions of the meeting. With the permission of participants, inputs and presentations will be posted on the website of the meeting.

Reference documents

Report of the Secretary-General on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development ([E/CN.9/2020/2](#))

Report of the Secretary-General on programmes and interventions for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in the context of population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development ([E/CN.9/2020/3](#))

[Website](#) and [report](#) of the 2019 EGM on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development