

**Statement by Mr. José Antonio Ocampo
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs**

**37th session of the Commission for Population and Development
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It gives me great pleasure to address the Commission for Population and Development for the first time in my capacity as Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

The Commission has a distinguished history dating back to its creation in 1946. The Commission on Population and Development was given a renewed mandate after the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) convened in Cairo in 1994. The Commission also played a critical role in both preparation and follow-up of earlier global conferences on population—in Bucharest in 1974 and in Mexico City in 1984—and, more recently, in the special session of the General Assembly, which in 1999 reviewed and appraised the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and agreed on key actions for its further implementation.

In addition to its mandate regarding Conference follow-up, the Commission on Population and Development has a key role in overseeing and providing broad direction to the programme of work of the United Nations Secretariat in the area of population. Further, the Commission plays a key role, within ECOSOC, in ensuring that the evolving trends and concerns with respect to population and development are brought to the attention of the Council and its other functional commissions.

Mr Chairman

As you are aware, the General Assembly has been considering for some time the modalities for the providing a coordinated review of the major social and economic conferences of the past decade, and in its resolution A/57/270B, adopted in June 2003, laid out guidelines for conducting such a coordinated review. Among those guidelines, the Assembly underscored that the functional commissions, when mandated, should continue to have the primary responsibility for the review and assessment of progress made in implementing United Nations conference documents (para 47 of 270B). And it is this Commission that has been charged with the primary responsibility for review and appraisal of the ICPD Programme of Action.

As part of the review process, the Assembly invited the contributions and participation of United Nations funds and programmes, regional commissions, and other offices and organizations of the United Nations system, and the collaboration of other global, regional and subregional organizations and processes, as appropriate. And, not least, it underscored the importance of the contribution of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to the implementation of conference outcomes.

Thus, it is gratifying to observe that this session of the Commission will have the participation not merely of the Commission's current members, but also many observers, many representatives of United Nations programmes and agencies, and of civil society organizations that have played such a vital role in the dialogue leading up to the ICPD and in the day-to-day activities of implementation of the recommendations of the Programme of Action. Many of those

assembled here today were at the very center of the negotiations that resulted, in September of 1994, in the adoption by consensus of the ICPD Programme of Action. Others have been key actors in the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the Conference.

Mr. Chairman

Issues of population encompass the most basic, and intimate, concerns of human life: it is the birth, death and migration of individuals that form the basic components of population change. For whole societies, these basic events produce rates of population increase or decrease, and form the age structure of the population and the geographic pattern of human settlements. These patterns are influenced by and in turn have their influence upon the social, economic, political and environmental issues that are the central concerns of the quest for sustainable development. They are central to our present well-being and central to our future prospects as societies, and as persons within societies.

Let us recall to mind for a moment the goals, principles and the spirit of the Programme of Action. The ICPD recognized that: "Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development...People are the most important and valuable resource of any nation." (Principle 2, Ch. II]. The Programme of Action was adopted in a spirit of optimism. In its very first paragraph, it stated that " Never before has the world community had so many resources, so much knowledge and such powerful technologies at its disposal which, if suitably redirected, could foster sustained economic growth and sustainable development" (para 1.1).

The Programme of Action, and the key actions for its further implementation that were identified at the special session of the GA in 1999, considered the full range of population issues as they relate to economic and social development. The Programme includes recommendations regarding young and old, women and men, girls and boys, families, rural and urban groups, indigenous people, persons with disabilities. It considers population in relation to the environment, and it emphasizes the needs of the poor and actions that will lift them out of poverty. The Programme of Action includes attention to issues that are now receiving heightened international attention, including international migration, population ageing, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It identified qualitative and quantitative goals in a number of key areas, including, among others, universal access to the knowledge and means for achieving reproductive health; goals regarding education, especially for girls; gender equity and equality; mortality and health, stressing infant, child and maternal mortality; and combating the emerging epidemic of HIV and AIDS. It also directed attention to the resources that would be required to meet the goals.

The Programme of Action is not just a set of goals. It lays forth a road map of practical policy and programmatic actions, the routes to follow to reach the goals. The task of the review and appraisal is to assess the progress on this journey. Where progress has been good, it is important to recognize this and to celebrate achievements. Yet, inevitably, attention must be directed to where we are, separately and collectively, lagging behind, and risk falling short of the goals. Where have we, as individual societies and collectively, proceeded too slowly or even lost ground? When this has happened, what are the reasons? What obstacles have appeared in the road, and what actions will be needed to surmount them?

There have been many changes since 1994 in population trends and in the social, economic and political situations with which those population trends are linked. There has been

progress towards meeting many of the ICPD objectives -- but that progress has been very uneven. I would like to highlight just a few of the major trends.

This year, world population will surpass 6.4 billion persons. The population in 2004 is nearly 800 million larger than in 1994; 95 per cent of that population increase occurred in less developed regions. Although the interaction between population dynamics and economic development is complex, the predominant view, as reflected in the Programme of Action, is that slower rates of population growth can allow more time to attack poverty, protect and repair the environment, and build the base for future sustainable development.

Globally, the average annual growth rate of population has decreased since the ICPD and is now 1.3 per cent. However, rates of population increase continue to vary greatly between countries. Today it is, in general, the least developed countries that are experiencing the most rapid population growth; during the past decade, the population of these countries grew at an annual rate of over 2.4 per cent. Rapid population growth remains a concern for more than half of Governments in the less developed regions. In the more developed regions, in contrast, a growing number of Governments are voicing concern over low rates of population growth and, in some countries, over population decline. In many cases, the concern is mainly with the consequences of population ageing for socio-economic development.

Since the ICPD in 1994, immigration has become a major issue of concern in an increasing number of countries. Widening disparities in wage and employment opportunities, as well as political instability in some countries, have increased the potential for politically as well as economically motivated international migration across national borders. Although the vast majority of migrants are making meaningful contributions to their host countries, international migration entails the loss of human resources for many countries of origin and may give rise to political, economic or social tensions in countries of destination.

In the key area of reproductive health, many countries have established reproductive health programmes, expanded access to them and improved their quality. Nevertheless, many millions still lack access to the means of achieving reproductive health.

The Programme of Action called for an increased national capacity to enhance primary health care and maternal and child health delivery networks, by expanding coverage to the poorest and most remote communities and families. Studies show that more pregnant women are indeed receiving antenatal care, yet many women still lack access to care and the risk of maternal mortality remains unacceptably high.

Infant and child mortality rates have improved in most countries, but 62 countries, accounting for 35 per cent of the world population, will not meet the goal of an infant mortality rate below 50 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2000-2005.

One hundred countries, representing nearly half of the world population, have met the Programme of Action goal of a life expectancy at birth greater than 70 years by 2005. However, 36 countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, remain with life expectancies at birth lower than 50 years. Many countries have witnessed a stagnation of mortality improvement and some have experienced a decline in life expectancy. The causes are related to political conflict, socio-economic transformations, the re-emergence of diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, and

the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This pandemic continues to expand throughout the world, producing a devastating impact on populations in terms of increased morbidity and mortality, and undermining prospects for social and economic development.

Finally, the Cairo Conference recognized that the formulation and implementation of population-related policies is the responsibility of each country, but it also recognized that all members of and groups in society have the right, and indeed the responsibility, to play an active part in efforts to reach those goals. It further recognized that national action needed to be supported by international cooperation. Thus, implementing the Programme of Action requires building and sustaining partnerships, building capacity, and mobilizing human and financial resources at all levels. An important task of the coming week will be to assess how far we have advanced in putting in place these critical institutional, human and financial underpinnings for building successful programmes, and to identify where there are gaps. One area in which the Conference goals have not been met is in mobilizing financial resources to implement the Programme of Action, as the Secretary-General's report on the flow of financial resources makes clear (E/CN.9/2004/4). Without the a solidly built and actively maintained foundation of political will and resources, both human and financial, the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action will not be fully achieved.

I wish you success in your deliberations, and reiterate the full support of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and its Population Division to your important work.