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STATEMENT TO THE THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

WORLD DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-  
GENERAL

AGENDA ITEM 7. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE  
PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE SECRETARIAT IN THE FIELD OF  
POPULATION

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Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for this opportunity to introduce the *Report of the Secretary-General on World Demographic Trends*. The report aims to present an overview of global demographic trends.

At the time of preparing this document, the results of *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision* were not yet available. However, the 2004 revision has recently been issued. Consequently, my presentation will be based on the results of the 2004 revision and thus the data presented here will differ somewhat from that appearing in the *Report of the Secretary-General*.

Mr. Chairman. I would like to highlight some of the major forces shaping world demographic trends.

**First, world population is larger.** World population stands at 6.5 billion persons today. The current average annual growth rate of population is 1.2 per cent. We anticipate that the 7 billion mark will be reached in 2013. Since last year's session of the Commission on Population and Development, 75 million people have been added to the world's population.

**Second, world population is older.** The population of all countries continues to age substantially, with the fastest pace taking place in less developed regions. Currently, there are some 672 million persons aged 60 years or older in the world, a number which is expected to triple by 2050. Such rapid growth will demand far-reaching economic and social adjustments in many countries. Since last year's session of the Commission on Population and Development, some 14 million older persons have been added to the world's population.

**Third, the world is more urbanized.** By 2007, one-half of the world's population will be urban-dwellers. In less developed regions, the number of urban dwellers is expected to equal the number of rural dwellers by 2017. In 1950, only two cities had 10 million or more inhabitants. Today, 20 cities have more than 10 million inhabitants. Since last year's session of the Commission on Population and Development, the number of the world's urban dwellers has increased by some 63 million people, 93 per cent of whom live in less developed regions.

**Fourth, fertility levels are lower and family size smaller.** The decrease in population growth at the world level is the result of the almost universal reduction of fertility. Couples are marrying later, having fewer children and having them later. The number of countries with fertility levels above 5 children per woman has dropped to 34, while the number of countries with below-replacement fertility has climbed to 66. Since last year's session of the Commission on Population and Development, there were some 133 million births in the world, of which 90 per cent occurred in less developed regions.

**Fifth, family planning has increased substantially.** Short-acting and reversible methods are more popular in developed countries, whereas longer-acting methods are more popular in developing countries.

**Sixth, people are living longer.** Life expectancy is higher in most countries, due to better hygiene and improved nutrition and medical practices. People in developed countries can expect to live to age 75 and to age 63 in developing countries.

**Seventh, the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to take a devastating toll, resulting in increased morbidity, mortality and population loss for the most affected countries.** Since last year's session of the Commission on Population and Development, almost 5 million people became newly infected with the HIV virus, while some 3.1 million persons died of AIDS.

**Eighth, international migration is increasing both in volume and impact.** At least 175 million persons reside in a country other than where they were born, three-fifths of whom are in the more developed regions. Since last year's session of the Commission on Population and Development, some 2.6 million persons on balance have moved from the less developed to the more developed regions.

**Ninth, developed and developing countries diverge significantly with regard to their population concerns.** High mortality, particularly infant and child mortality, maternal mortality and mortality related to HIV/AIDS is the most significant population concern for developing countries. The most significant demographic concern of developed countries relates to low fertility and its consequences, namely population ageing and the shrinking of the working-age population.

**Tenth, Governments are becoming increasingly concerned with the consequences of population trends.** Governments are now more inclined to view population as a legitimate area of Government action and to act upon these concerns by formulating and implementing policies which address these issues.

In summary Mr. Chairman, the current population picture is one of dynamic population change, reflected in new and diverse patterns of family formation, childbearing, mortality, ageing, urbanization and migration. The continuation and consequences of these population trends present unique opportunities, as well as challenges for all societies in the twenty-first century.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.