

Countries to examine population mega-trends and their impact on realizing the Sustainable Development Goals



The world's population is growing larger and older. Currently at 7.7 billion, the global population is projected to increase to around 9.7 billion by 2050. At the same time, more people are on the move and more people are settling down in urban areas. How will these demographic “mega-trends” impact global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals? Assessing the interlinkages between demographic change, population programmes and sustainable development will be one of the tasks at hand when the Commission on Population and Development convenes at UN Headquarters in New York for its 52nd session on 1-5 April.

This year marks 25 years since the landmark International Conference on Population and Development was held in Cairo. The Commission will examine the gains that have been made in implementing the Programme of Action adopted 25 years ago, as well as the gaps and shortfalls in achieving its goals and objectives. The full implementation of the Programme of Action is critical for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Programme of Action from the Cairo conference was the first of its kind in promoting a people-centred approach to development grounded in the respect for human rights, empowerment of women and environmental sustainability.

This year's session will celebrate the considerable progress made towards implementing the Cairo agenda over the past quarter century. Milestone achievements include greater access to sexual and reproductive health care, reductions in child and maternal mortality, increased life expectancy, reduced incidence of poverty, improved access to education, and advances in gender equality and empowerment of women.

But the pace of progress has been uneven both within and between regions and countries. While life expectancy has increased in all world regions, the current gap in life expectancy between countries in the more developed regions and the least developed countries is 15 years.

Under-five child mortality rates have fallen by half since 1994. However, a child born in sub-Saharan Africa today is more than 15 times as likely to die before age 5 compared with a child born in the more developed regions. Overall, the benefits of social and economic progress have not been shared equitably.

In some countries, rapid population growth is putting added pressure on service delivery systems and scarce resources. Over time, increased access to education and health care, especially for women and girls, helps to lower birth rates, slowing population growth.

In other countries, historically low levels of fertility are contributing to population ageing and, in extreme cases, to population decline. Such trends present a challenge to sustained economic growth and to social protection systems for older persons.

In all countries, the shift from rural to urban living is bringing advantages for sustainable development, including reduced per capita energy consumption and improved access to services. However, urbanization must be managed well to avoid negative consequences resulting from unbridled urban growth.

In countries of origin and destination throughout the world, migration that is safe, orderly and regular is making a positive contribution to sustainable development. Implementing the 2030 Agenda will help to address the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel some people to leave their homes.

Attaining the shared objectives of the Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda will require a redoubling of efforts to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health care, protect reproductive rights, end poverty, advance quality education, ensure decent work for all, reduce social and economic inequalities, and ensure sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Meeting the demand for a high standard of living from a growing global population, while addressing the environmental impacts of human activities, including climate change, is one of the central challenges of the 21st century.

During its upcoming session, the Commission is expected to adopt a political declaration that reaffirms the commitment by UN Member States to implement the Programme of Action, reflecting also its relevance for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The declaration is expected to deliver further actions to ensure that the Programme's vision is made a reality, benefiting people and development.

For more information:

[52nd session of the Commission on Population and Development](#)