

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving me the floor. As Chair of the 54th session of the Commission on Population and Development, I very much appreciate this opportunity. I will try to address as many issues from the concept note as I can in the five minutes that I have.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

As you may be aware, this year's theme of the Commission on Population and Development is "Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development". The Commission had the same theme last year, but with a special focus on the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Commission on Population and Development has much to contribute to the work of ECOSOC during 2021, including the high-level political forum. Last year, the Commission's deliberations revealed that the pandemic had greatly affected food security and nutrition already by May of last year. Let me give two examples:

First, the pandemic was quickly reversing the progress being made towards ending hunger and achieving food security and improved nutrition, as called for in Goal 2 of the 2030 Agenda.

Second, there were early indications that measures to curtail the spread of the new coronavirus were having major negative consequences for global trade and the movement of food and food-related items.

There was hope, however, that actions taken to improve food security and nutrition in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic would contribute to a long-term transformation of the global food system.

The Commission found that more work was needed to strengthen programmes that address all forms of malnutrition, including both undernutrition and overweight or obesity. Programmes to support food security and nutrition in humanitarian settings are especially important. Priority should be given to meeting the nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating women and of their infants and young children.

I hope that our upcoming session will make an important contribution to the UN Food Systems Summit later this year. The Summit will be an important opportunity for accelerating the transition towards inclusive, sustainable and resilient food systems and towards diversified, balanced and healthy diets for all.

Concerning our contributions to the work of ECOSOC and the HLPF, I believe there is room for improvement. Given that the annual session of the Commission on Population and Development generally takes place in April, it has been difficult to ensure that the Commission's key messages are well reflected in the documentation prepared for ECOSOC. Perhaps we should review the current information flow or consider adjusting time frames.

Dear colleagues,

The perspective offered by the Commission on Population and Development is critical for the work of ECOSOC. The four demographic megatrends, namely, population growth, population ageing, international migration and urbanization, are powerful forces that have major implications for achieving the SDGs.

Let me give two examples. First, in many least developed countries, high rates of population growth challenge the implementation of the 2030 Agenda simply because infrastructure and service delivery must keep pace with the rapidly growing population. Second, in many developed countries, population ageing is altering the relationship between older and younger generations, with major financial implications.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the population estimates produced by the Population Division of DESA, which supports the Commission's substantive work, are being used as inputs for the calculation of roughly one third of the 231 SDG indicators.

In this spirit, let me suggest that a cross-cutting theme for the work of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies in 2022 or 2023 could be population ageing. Such work could enrich the global review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing which the Commission for Social Development will conduct in 2023. Adoption of such a cross-cutting theme could promote cooperation and add coherence to the work of various functional commissions, in particular CPD, CSocD, CSW and the Statistical Commission.

Lastly, let me say few words on working methods. The previous Bureau set in motion a reflection on the future role and organization of work of the Commission on Population and Development. Last week, we convened a brainstorming meeting on this issue. So far, Member States have demonstrated limited interest in a prolonged discussion on this topic, given the Commission's recent review of its working methods in 2016. Moreover, a change in working methods is unlikely to overcome the deadlock in negotiations that the Commission has experienced in recent years.

Thank you