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ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLICY CO-ORDINATION
AND INTER-AGENCY AFFAIRS**

Remarks

**High-level plenary on “Commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the
International Conference on Population and Development”**

Tuesday, 16 July 2019, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
General Assembly Hall

Your Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the General Assembly,
Your Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Your Excellency, Dr. Hala Zayed, Minister of Health and Population of Egypt,
UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem,
Ms. Banice Mbuki Mburu, Civil Society Representative of the African Coalition on Population
and Development,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, I am
pleased to join today’s commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the International Conference
on Population and Development.

The ICPD Programme of Action remains a forward-looking agenda that sets out the
connections between population, poverty alleviation, sustained economic growth and
environmental sustainability. It also recognizes the centrality of individual rights and well-being.

Since the Cairo conference, many successes have been achieved.

Global life expectancy at birth has risen by seven years and child mortality has fallen by
more than half. More people are able to decide on the number and timing of their children,
resulting in a decline in the global fertility rate and slowing the growth of the global population.

Yet, many challenges remain.

I’ll mention one: very telling one, in 2019, life expectancy at birth in the least developed
countries lags more than 7 years behind the global average.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Commission on Population and Development is the primary mechanism to follow up and review the Cairo Programme of Action. Three months ago, the Commission adopted a political declaration, emphasizing that the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The analytical work of DESA's Population Division highlights four key demographic "megatrends", that will shape the context of global population in the coming years, impacting the further implementation of the Programme of Action.

First, the global population is still growing, albeit at a slowing rate. Many of the fastest growing populations are found in the world's poorest countries, where population growth brings additional challenges to the effort to eradicate poverty, combat hunger and malnutrition, and to strengthening the coverage and quality of education and health systems.

Second, as population growth slows down, populations grow older. While population ageing is a sign of human progress, we must adjust our policies to ensure that no one is left behind.

Third, more people than ever before are changing their country of residence. The Cairo Programme of Action was among the first agreements committing goals and objectives to address the challenges and enhance the benefits of international migration for development.

Lastly, the world continues to experience an ongoing shift in population distribution, from rural to urban areas, with attendant challenges for sustainability and development.

The timing and manifestation of these major population trends vary across countries. The circumstances in each country must drive the policies as part of overall development planning conforming with internationally agreed principles.

In closing, let me congratulate Dr. Kanem for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Population Fund. I thank her and her colleagues for many years of excellent collaboration in supporting the follow-up and review of the Programme of Action.

Thank you.
