48th Commission on Population and Development
17 April 2015

Agenda item 6 "Programme implementation and future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population"

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam Chair,

Italy would like to praise the UN Population Division for the work it has done in all these years. The database that it has created, which covers some 200 countries since 1950 and includes projections and forecasts up to the year 2100, has become an essential standard of reference - one may say “the” standard of reference - for all that concerns population matters at the national and international level.

The huge effort of collecting information from all over the world, of reconciling contrasting elements, of properly weighing sources with varying degrees of reliability, of merging surveys with censuses with administrative data combines with a very clear presentation of the output, where virtually everything is put at the disposal of the public, for free, in a well-organized and user-friendly format. Scholars, journalists, NGO’s and policy makers are the primary beneficiaries of this endeavour.

Of course, one would always want “more”: more information on migration, for instance, or on households, or at the subnational level. And one would also want “better” information: for instance, forecasts that prove perfectly correct when the time of their (biennial) revision comes, and that never need adjustment. These expectations are useful, in that they stimulate the Population Division to keep doing its best in what it does already and to expand its field of activities. But they should not be exaggerated: in most cases, even the best national statistical offices ignore some basic facts (on migration, notably) and fail in their projection. And this about their own country: imagine working on 200 hundred at the same time.

Madam Chair,

Italy counts on the continuation of the very commendable activities of the UN Population Division.

I thank you, Madam Chair.