

**UNFPA Statement, 8 March  
Rio 2012 PrepCom**

**Delivered by Jose Miguel Guzman**

**Chief, Population and Development Branch, UNFPA**

As this is the first time that UNFPA is taking the floor, please Mr. Chair allow me to refer in my intervention to question 6 of today's discussion, but also addresses question 7 of the discussion on the green economy, and question 5 of the discussion on objectives of the conference.

UNFPA considers that in order to provide effective policy guidance on how to reduce poverty while ensuring environmental sustainability, UNCSD will need to complement its green economy focus with a population focus. The shift towards the green economy is an essential element in the promotion of sustainable development, but to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development will require the pursuit of a broader approach which addresses population dynamics in an integrated way. This approach has important effects on the way different national institutions cooperate in the implementation of a coordinated framework to ensure sustainability.

Yet population dynamics have not been yet fully considered in the formulation of development strategies and in the preparations for this conference. The political and institutional realities are lagging behind the clear vision of international landmark conferences of the 1990s, most notably the Rio conference on sustainable development and the Cairo conference on population and development, which placed population issues high on the agenda.

We need to put people at the center of sustainable development. In

this regard, we need to consider that the world population will approach 7 billion this year or next year and is projected to reach 9 billion by 2045, the stakes are raised for sustainable development. While population growth has slowed across the world, it remains high in the world's least developed countries, where the number of people is expected to double between now and 2050. One consequence of this growth is a large and rapidly growing share of young people.

It is clear that population dynamics significantly raise the stakes in efforts to combat poverty and promote food security, create sufficient employment and produce sufficient food, while at the same time ensuring environmental sustainability.

But it is not population growth as such, but population growth paired with the need to raise living standards that has a strong impact on natural resources. Against the background of population growth, poverty reduction -- which necessitates higher consumption and production -- will have an increasing impact on all natural resources -- land, forests, water and the climate. In turn, the degradation of natural resources and climate change are having a negative impact on agricultural production and food security in most countries.

But the twin objectives of reducing poverty and promoting environmental sustainability can be seen as opposed objectives. They can be met by promoting a transition to a green economy and addressing population dynamics. The green economy is not a luxury, and population dynamics are not destiny. All countries can benefit from a shift towards a more sustainable model of production and consumption and all can do more to address population dynamics.

In a recent survey of the United Nations Population Division more

than 70 per cent of the governments of least developed countries expressed major concerns about their high population growth and fertility levels, and said that they pursued active policies to address these challenges.

I want to focus now in three areas of coordination between different UN entities, Agencies and international organizations:

(First)

Efforts to lower fertility rates by improving access to reproductive health care, including family planning. This not only reduces maternal and child mortality and arrests the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, but also empowers women to decide the timing, spacing and number of their children. With fewer children, families are able to invest more in their children's education and health. A More sustainable world needs people educated and empowered.

(Second )

Efforts to promote sustainable development by taking into consideration the spatial distribution of populations and the growth of cities. Today half of all people live in urban areas and by 2050 more than two-thirds of the world's population will be living in urban areas. This unprecedented urbanization can deepen poverty and environmental degradation, or it can enhance development and sustainability if countries plan ahead.

(Third)

Data: A rising demand for water, sanitation, power, transport and waste management, as well as education and health, must be matched by concomitant investments. Planning must be based on population data and projections and the 2010 round of censuses will

provide the baseline for these analyses for the next decade.

In conclusion, sustainable development strategies -- for countries and their sub-regions -- must account for current and future population dynamics. Populations are at the heart of sustainable development, and sustainable development will need to pay adequate attention to population dynamics. We are looking forward to cooperate with other UN organizations at the country, regional and global level in the implementation of the agreements from Rio+20.