



## Changing population age structures and sustainable development: Achievements, challenges, opportunities

At its 50th session in April 2017, the Commission on Population and Development will consider a universal feature of recent population trends: changing population age structures. Gradual shifts in the age distribution of a population present both challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. The world's population has undergone profound changes as mortality and fertility levels have decreased around the world. This pair of changes, known together as the demographic transition, leads initially to rapid growth and a younger population, driven by an early reduction in child mortality.

A subsequent decline in fertility triggers population ageing, which is further accentuated by reductions in adult mortality and the resulting increase in the number of persons who survive to older ages. The speed and timing of the demographic transition have varied greatly across countries and regions.

### Major achievement of human development

The demographic transition represents a major achievement of human development. It has brought higher rates of survival from childhood to adulthood and longer life spans, as a consequence of an overall improvement in health. Other important

elements of the transition are the greater ability of couples to choose the number and timing of any children they may desire, and the increased certainty that both children and mothers will survive the challenges of birth and childbirth.

The historical reductions in mortality and fertility are driven by, and help to reinforce, other defining aspects of sustainable development, including expanded access to education, improvements in sexual and reproductive health, and greater gender equality. Collectively, these changes promote an increased productivity of workers, a larger workforce especially as women take on new social roles, and a higher standard of living.

Changing population age structures also present a substantial challenge, especially to countries that are unprepared for them. The failure to account for and adapt to changes in a population's age structure can exacerbate existing gaps in development, especially when the shift in population over time is toward age groups that lack access to essential services and social protection. Countries with growing populations of young people must find ways to provide education and employment opportunities for youth or risk forfeiting some of their potential contribution toward sustainable development.

## Preparing for ageing populations

Because of population ageing, the number of persons requiring extended care due to disability or functional limitation is likely to increase in all countries. National health systems should promote healthy lifestyles and provide quality care throughout the life course. Governments and other stakeholders should support family caregivers while also providing options for community-based and institutional care when needed.

Countries unprepared for the challenge of population ageing will face difficulties in managing its fiscal impacts on public support systems for older persons. One policy option is to increase the statutory age of retirement in tandem with increasing life expectancy. Many countries have pursued other reforms of their social security systems, focusing on both the adequacy and the sustainability of the systems.

The challenges of population ageing can be mitigated to some extent if the population maintains a birth rate that is sufficient to ensure replacement of successive generations. In many countries today, young and middle-aged persons, especially women, face substantial challenges in balancing the demands of work and family, including caring for children and older parents. Policies that support the participation of women in the labour force, parental leave for both fathers and mothers, affordable child care, and long-term care for older persons, when needed, can ease downward pressures on the birth rate while contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment.



Commission on Population and Development meets in early April

The Commission on Population and Development will consider these important issues when

it meets from 3 to 7 April at UN Headquarters in New York. Informed by two recent reports of the Secretary-General, the Commission's deliberations on the annual theme will be the main activity of delegates and other stakeholders, including many from

civil society. There will also be keynote presentations, national voluntary presentations combined with a panel discussion and interactive debate, and a variety of side-events that will enhance and enrich the discussions.

It is anticipated that the Commission will point toward the ongoing changes in population age structure as important opportunities to enhance social and economic development. When the share of children in a population falls while that of working-age adults rises, there is typically a temporary increase in the ratio of workers to dependents.

## The potential of a “demographic dividend”

A relative increase in the size of the working-age population can help to accelerate economic growth and the rise in income per capita. However, achieving the full benefit of this potential “demographic dividend” requires investment in human capital — ensuring access to health care and education at all ages — and opportunities for productive employment.

In later stages of the demographic transition, when population ageing puts pressure on budgets for public pensions and health care, the increasing proportion of older persons can nevertheless be accompanied by robust economic growth. Larger cohorts of older persons and increased savings per capita — partly in reaction to longer lifespans — can result in more money being available for capital investment, which can stimulate economic growth. To benefit fully from this second “demographic dividend”, countries should invest in education and health, ensure opportunities for productive employment, and encourage savings and investment.

In the video commemorating the 50th session of the Commission on Population and Development, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Wu Hongbo, stated that by the year 2050, the population may increase to 9 billion. Such dramatic population growth will present challenges for everyone – for governments and the international community. UN DESA’s Population Division and the Commission on Population and Development should use this opportunity to assess the trends and provide the policy guidance that is so important for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## Celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Commission

The 50th session of the Commission on Population and Development, taking place in 2017, also marks the 70th anniversary of the Commission, since its predecessor, the Population Commission, met for the first time in 1947. As stated by Carmen Barroso, former Director of International Planned Parenthood Federation, Western Hemisphere Region (IPPF/WHR): “The Commission plays a very important role because it has a solid technical background, but at the same time it is a space for political negotiation. The political negotiations are very complex, dealing with life, death, and power relationships”.

The Commission’s discussions this year on changing population age structures and sustainable development will encourage governments to become more familiar with a fundamental and universal aspect of demographic change that presents both challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. The Commission’s work will help to ensure that policy making on these important topics will be informed by a factual understanding of the underlying population dynamics that are shaping countries, regions and the world.

Follow the discussion on Twitter using the hashtags #CPD50, #UNPopulation and #UNDESA70. The plenary session will also be broadcast live via UN Web TV.

For more information:  
50th session of the Commission on Population and Development

## HIGHLIGHTS



### Global solutions to global challenges: ECOSOC Partnership Forum

Recognizing the key role of fostering fruitful and successful partnerships in the success of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Economic and Social Council is hosting its annual Partnership Forum on 5 April this year. Sustainable development for current and future generations has become the

center of everything we do at the United Nations, and thus the ECOSOC Partnership Forum will explore ways to promote partnerships for global solutions to the global challenges as we move towards a sustainable future.

This year, the forum will focus on sustainable infrastructure development as a means for achieving these goals. Infrastructure development plays a catalytic role in fostering economic growth and employment, reducing poverty and inequality and facilitating development in all countries.

Over the years, the Partnership Forum has provided a platform for stakeholders from both civil society and the private sector to address cooperation for promoting opportunities, increased prosperity and sustainable development for all. It has grown to be an indispensable mechanism for overcoming the many challenges and bottlenecks to sustainable development for all.

As the international community continues to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals – the collective effort of international organizations, Member States, and the civil society – effective partnerships remain a key component for their achievement. A holistic approach to the massive task of creating a sustainable future for all of us is therefore critical, keeping global solutions to global challenges within reach.

ECOSOC's 2017 Partnership Forum will take place at UNHQ in New York on Wednesday, 5 April 2017.

For more information:  
2017 ECOSOC Partnership Forum



### Indigenous peoples from all over the world gather for Permanent Forum

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will meet for its 16th session from Monday 24 April to Friday 28 April 2017. [More than 1,000 indigenous participants](#) are expected to attend the Session, making it not only one of the most culturally diverse United Nations meetings, but also one of the largest public gatherings at UN Headquarters

every year. A special focus this year will be the celebration of the “10th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.” The Declaration, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007, was a historical achievement after more than 25 years of negotiations.

The Declaration sets the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of indigenous peoples. It embodies a global consensus on individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples, including the rights to self-determination, traditional lands, education, culture, health, and to pursue a distinct vision of economic and social development.

The anniversary will be marked by a high-level event of the General Assembly, taking place on 25 April from 10 am to 1 pm. The anniversary will be an opportunity to assess the achievements and remaining challenges in implementing the Declaration.

While the Declaration has helped improve the lives and prospects of indigenous peoples across the world, indigenous peoples continue to face extreme marginalization and exclusion in many societies. Where data is available, it shows shorter life expectancy, higher infant and maternal mortality rates, and lower educational attainment among indigenous peoples than the general population.

Other topics on the agenda of the 16th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues include the six mandated areas of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues: health, education, human rights, economic and social development, environment and culture.

Furthermore, the Permanent Forum will have dedicated sessions about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how to ensure that indigenous peoples are not left behind in development of national implementation plans, as well as in national voluntary reviews and follow-up. There will also be deliberations on the follow-up to the Permanent Forum’s recommendations, in particular related to indigenous women and youth – and a discussion about the critical situation of indigenous human rights defenders.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is an expert body of the Economic and Social Council with the mandate to provide expert advice to the Council and raise awareness on indigenous issues.

Twelve new experts joined the Permanent Forum on 1 January 2017: Mr. Les Malezer (Australia), Mr. Jens Dahl (Denmark), Ms. Lourdes Tibán Guala (Ecuador), Ms. Anne Nuorgam (Finland), Mr. Seyed Moshen Emadi (Iran), Mr. Jesus Guadalupe Fuentes Blanco (México), Mr. Phoolman Chaudhary (Nepal), Ms. Tarcila Rivera Zea (Peru), Mr. Dimitri Zaitcev (Russian Federation), Mr. Elifuraha Laltaika (United Republic of Tanzania), Ms. Terri Henry (United States of America) and Mr. Brian Keane (United States of America). Mr. Gervais Nzoa (Cameroon), Ms. Mariam Wallet Aboubakrine (Mali) and Ms. Aisa Mukabenova (Russian Federation) are continuing in a second term. One expert member seat is yet to be filled.

For more information:

[United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#)

## GET INVOLVED



## Building strong institutions for effective implementation of the SDGs

The UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) will meet from 24 to 28 April for its sixteenth session at UN Headquarters in New York. The twenty-four Committee members will hold discussions on the theme of “Ensuring effective implementation of the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) through leadership, action and means”.

“Transforming public institutions is essential to support the type of inclusive and integrated policies needed to realize the SDGs,” Mr. Wu Hongbo, UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General noted in last year’s CEPA session.

“Making progress on one SDG requires making progress on the other SDGs. These inter-dependencies require an unprecedented level of policy integration among the various ministries, between central and local institutions and between governmental and non-governmental actors”, Mr. Wu said.

Many Member States are well engaged in adapting their public institutions in order to implement the 2030 Agenda. They are creating inter-ministerial coordination bodies and mobilizing ministries, local authorities, parliaments and civil society. CEPA will discuss lessons from the current changes and provide advice from a public administration perspective.

This year, the Committee will focus on the following key issues: (1) Understanding the needs of local authorities and communities and supporting and equipping them for the implementation of the SDGs; (2) Institutional leadership and the SDGs; (3) Institutional arrangements for the SDGs; (4) Development of principles of effective

governance; (5) Strategies for integrated action to achieve poverty eradication: implications for public institutions.

One sub-topic to be discussed under the theme of institutional arrangements for the SDGs is multi-stakeholder approach to comprehensive policy integration. To this end, dialogue with various stakeholders such as the civil society, businesses, citizens and the scientific community will be essential to localize national sustainable development strategies. The stakeholders can help to address the integrated and inclusive nature of the SDGs.

The Committee will adopt a report for the ECOSOC with conclusions and recommendations.

CEPA was established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2001 and is responsible for supporting the work of ECOSOC on public administration and governance among Member States in connection with the internationally agreed development goals, including the SDGs.

For more information:

UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)

## EXPERT VOICES



### Advancing international tax cooperation

On 3 April, the 14th session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters will kick off in New York. Running through 6 April, the event will spotlight a range of topics aimed at advancing international tax collaboration. Ahead of the session, UN DESA Voice reached out to the team of experts in UN DESA's Financing for Development Office, including Economic Affairs Officers Ojeda Alvarez and Tatiana Falcao and

Michael Lennard, the Chief of the International Tax Cooperation Unit. They shared more details on the work of the Committee and the role that tax cooperation plays for development.

How has the Committee strengthened the UN's role in international tax cooperation?

“The [Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters](#) (Tax Committee) is a subsidiary body of ECOSOC tasked with addressing issues of taxation, paying special attention when doing so to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

In this context, the Tax Committee is responsible for keeping under review and update the United Nations Model Double Taxation Convention between Developed and Developing Countries (the UN Model Tax Convention), the Manual for the Negotiation of Bilateral Tax Treaties between Developed and Developing Countries, and for making recommendations on new and emerging issues that could affect international cooperation in tax matters.

The Tax Committee also aims to enhance and promote international tax cooperation among national tax authorities and assesses how new and emerging issues could affect this cooperation. In addition, the Tax Committee makes recommendations for capacity building and for providing technical assistance.”

**What are some investment options low-income countries can take advantage of with effective and efficient use of tax incentives?**

“Low-income countries [LICs] only have limited opportunities to take advantage of investment options with effective and efficient use of tax incentives. Their fiscal cost can be high, thus diverting resources from other public spending or requiring higher taxation of other activities. It is the sovereign decision of countries whether to offer such incentives.

Some carefully crafted incentives that were kept under continuous review have contributed to investment and development. International tax cooperation can play an important role in helping LICs to run ex-ante and ex-post cost-benefit analyses to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of tax incentives policies.

It can also help countries to develop fiscal policies that directly or indirectly promote investment. This prevents the wasteful use of incentives for projects that would proceed anyway, as well as investments that will depart the country or become loss-making as soon as the incentive ends.

In any case, good governance is critical for the effective and efficient administration of tax incentives. Transparency is necessary to facilitate accountability and reduce opportunities for rent seeking and corruption.”

**What new or emerging issues could affect international tax cooperation?**

“The involvement of civil society and the press in scrutinizing the tax affairs of multinational enterprises, as well as publicizing the tax incentives offered for investment, has added a new dimension to the tax-debate.

It is already influencing policy decisions, such as the development of OECD/G20 country-by country tax reporting rules that are seen as especially benefitting developing countries. The call for such reports to be made publicly available will continue.

Another critical point is the way in which developing countries can access the information they need to support their tax bases. Some means for achieving the necessary “information capture”, such as automatic exchange between tax authorities, are very promising. However, there is a widespread recognition that countries are not yet able to participate in automatic exchange, for example due to low information technology capacity, high cost and limited resource availability. The need to respect legitimate taxpayer confidentiality applies in any case.

The necessary level of engagement in an economy before the revenue authorities of that economy can tax profits made there under tax treaties is another increasingly important issue. Finally, increasing scrutiny on how truly global the participation in global tax “norm-setting” has been will result in greater importance for the UN.”



## What is expected to come out of this session?

“The session will see the effective completion of the work programme of the current Membership of the Committee. This includes the 2017 update to the UN Model Tax Convention, which is used by many developing countries in the negotiation of bilateral tax agreements, and which preserves robust taxing rights to the capital importer; an updated UN Practical Manual on Transfer Pricing for Developing Countries (which assists in countering international profit shifting) and a Handbook on Selected Issues in Taxing the Extractive Industries.

The Committee has already updated the UN Manual for the Negotiation of Bilateral Tax Treaties between Developed and Developing Countries. The Committee is also expected to lay out an initial path for future Committee work on international tax dispute resolution, the taxation of the digital economy and on environmental tax issues for developing countries.”

### For more information:

Fourteenth Session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



## Statistical Commission adds last piece for full implementation of SDGs

Two years after the Commission created the Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), the global statistical community has come together to fulfill the promise of delivering a global indicator framework

for the 2030 Agenda as requested by the UN General Assembly. By adopting the SDGs indicator framework on 10 March, the international community has a robust structure in place for keeping track of our efforts to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With the help of the global SDG indicator framework, the global statistical community will be able to ensure that the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda is supported by this set of global indicators and based on the best data available, both from new and from traditional sources.

The path to today's success is the result of collective efforts involving national statistical offices, international and regional organizations, civil society, other stakeholders and UN DESA's Statistics Division, which serves as the Secretariat for the IAEG-SDGs.

At this historic moment, the Commission also adopted the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, which was developed by the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB).

The Action Plan was launched at the first UN World Data Forum on 15 January, calling for a commitment by governments, policy leaders, and the international community to work collectively toward achieving better data for the SDGs. It also addresses the critical elements necessary for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The entire global statistical community stands ready to continue the hard work already undertaken on improving methodologies and data and increasing capacity building to ensure the full implementation of the agenda in order to guarantee that no one is left behind.

The Commission also gave the green light to the Global Working Group on Big Data, to explore a technical framework for a global platform in broad partnership with tech companies. It moreover endorsed the principles of Global Statistical-Geospatial Framework and decided to scale up economic statistics and national accounts programmes to produce high-quality data for the SDGs.

The adoption of the draft resolution on the indicator framework and the Cape Town Global Action Plan at the 48th session of the Statistical Commission is a seminal moment in the history of the Statistical Commission, which celebrates its 70th anniversary this year.

In her concluding remarks, the Chair of the Commission, Ms. Wasmália Bivar from Brazil, noted that the global statistical community is "living the history of 70 years... carrying out indivisible, transformative work."

For more information:

[Statisticians celebrate 70 years of global collaboration](#)

[48th session of the UN Statistical Commission](#)

[UN Web TV: Watch the sessions of the UN Statistical Commission](#)

## Preparations for the Ocean Conference on track

The preparations for the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development – The Ocean Conference – are in full swing. The conference will take place from 5 to 9 June 2017 at UN Headquarters in New York.

The themes of the seven partnership dialogues of the Conference have been decided, they are:

- Addressing marine pollution
- Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems
- Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification
- Making fisheries sustainable
- Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets
- Increasing scientific knowledge, and developing research capacity and transfer of marine technology
- Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea



The partnership dialogues will deal with all targets of SDG 14 and will aim to strengthen cooperation, scale up and replicate existing successful initiatives and launch concrete and new partnerships that will advance the implementation

of SDG 14. Details about the times and venues of these dialogues can be found on the [Conference website](#).

### “Call for Action”

The first round of intergovernmental consultations on the zero draft of the “Call for Action”, the outcome document of the Ocean Conference, took place on 20-22 March 2017 at UN Headquarters in New York.

The co-facilitators of the preparatory process of the Ocean Conference, H.E. Mr. Alvaro Mendonça Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations, and H.E. Mr. Burhan Gafoor, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations, chaired the consultations.

Delegations went through the zero draft prepared by the co-facilitators and finished the first reading. Delegations were generally satisfied with the zero draft and considered it a good basis for further consultations. Based on the comments from the meeting, the co-facilitators will prepare and circulate a revised draft by mid-April. The second round of consultations will be held on 24, 25 and 27 April in New York.

## Registering voluntary commitments

UN DESA's Under-Secretary-General Mr. Wu Hongbo has sent a letter to Member States in which, among other things, he encourages them to announce voluntary commitments. "I would like to encourage Governments and all stakeholders to register voluntary commitments that aim to contribute to the implementation of SDG 14 and associated targets", he said.

The voluntary commitments can be registered through the [online form at the Conference website](#). 31 commitments have been registered by 31 March. A list of commitments will be compiled at the end of the Conference and will be included in the report of the Conference as an important outcome.

[Guidelines for the side events, exhibitions, registration to the Conference as well as important dates and deadlines](#) and are now also available at the official website.

For more information:

The Ocean Conference

Be a part of ocean history: Join the efforts to #SaveOurOcean by registering your commitment!



PHOTO: UN DESA/Sharif Nijman

**“I would like to encourage Governments**

**and all stakeholders to register voluntary commitments that aim to contribute to the implementation of SDG 14 and associated targets.”**

**— WU HONGBO**

UN DESA's Under-Secretary-General and Conference Secretary-General



UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK,  
5-9 JUNE 2017

**#SaveOurOcean**  
oceanconference.un.org

The Ocean Conference taking place this June, aims to be the game changer that will reverse the decline in the health of our ocean for people, planet and prosperity. It will be solutions-focused, seeking the engagement from all actors within the international community.

In addition to the outcome document, the “Call for Action”, gathering as many voluntary commitments as possible to help implement Sustainable Development Goal 14, will be an important goal for this event. The international community is therefore strongly encouraged to make voluntary pledges via the Conference website ahead of the event. By 31 March, 31 commitments have been made via the online commitment registry.

Find out who have made pledges so far and register your voluntary commitment here!  
<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>3-7 April, New York</b>       | 50th Session of the Commission on Population and Development       |
| <b>7 April, New York</b>         | ECOSOC special meeting on international cooperation in tax matters |
| <b>22 April, Washington D.C.</b> | Global Infrastructure Forum 2017                                   |
| <b>24 April-5 May, New York</b>  | 16th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues           |
| <b>24-28 April, New York</b>     | 16th session of Committee of Experts on Public Administration      |

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