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Commission on Population and Development Background Guide 2025

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Deepak Dinesh, and Elias Sepulveda



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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce to you our committee, the Commission on Population and Development (CPD). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Harrison Baile and Assistant Director Deepak Dinesh (Conference A), and Director Christopher Stansel and Assistant Director Elias Sepulveda (Conference B). Harrison recently graduated with a Master's degree in political studies from the University of Saskatchewan. He currently works in policy for the Government of the Northwest Territories. Deepak studies at Worcester Polytechnic Institute majoring in Business with a concentration in Business Analytics. Christopher studied Political Science and Sustainability Science at the University of Florida, he now works in logistics coordination for small businesses. Elias is a third-year student studying Philosophy and International Development Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Gamaliel Perez (Conference A) and Courtney Indart (Conference B) with contributions by Under-Secretaries-General for Conference Management Joshua Andersen (Conference A) and Kenny Nguyen (Conference B).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. 30 Year Review on Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development
2. Addressing Population Growth in Urban and Peri-Urban Areas

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. ET on 1 March 2025 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsg.ny@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Harrison Baile, Director
Deepak Dinesh, Assistant Director
Conference A

Christopher Stansel, Director
Elias Sepulveda, Assistant Director
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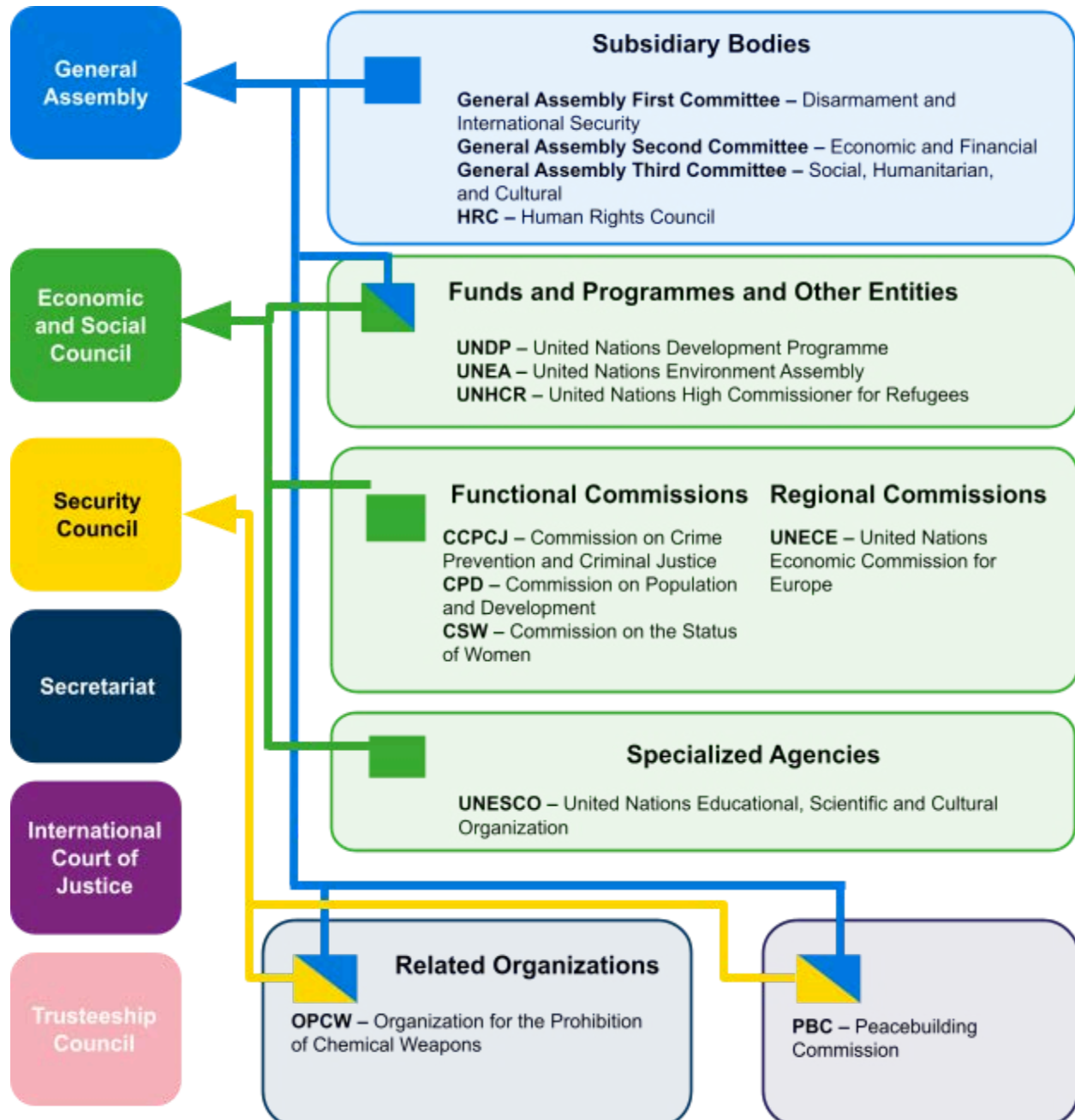
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United Nations System at NMUN·NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN·NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations





Committee Overview

Introduction

The world's population is projected to reach almost 10 billion by the year 2050, an increase of 26% compared with 2019.¹ Due to this unprecedented rapid population growth, it is essential for the international community to identify and monitor population growth, population aging, migration, and urbanization.² The Programme of Action (PoA), adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, identifies the links between a myriad of population and development issues, including accessibility for older populations and persons with disabilities, migrants, sexual and reproductive health, human rights, and sustainable development.³ The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the PoA.⁴ CPD continues to lead debates about population trends and serves as a critical body that conducts research on these issues and provides suggestions to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).⁵

Mandate, Function and Powers

The roots of CPD are found in the Population Commission, established by ECOSOC in 1946, aiming to offer a platform for Member States, civil society, and other key stakeholders to discuss international issues on human development and population-related social challenges.⁶ As one of the ten functional commissions of ECOSOC, the Population Commission was mandated to follow-up on the 1994 PoA.⁷ The body was renamed that year to CPD to highlight its comprehensive approach to addressing issues related to the challenges of population and development, as outlined in the PoA.⁸

Whilst the following list is not exhaustive, the mandate of CPD can be summarized as:

- **CPD will generally:** conduct studies on population and development themes; request UNFPA or the Secretary-General to conduct research; monitor, review, and assess the PoA; contribute to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; provide policy recommendations on population and development for both ECOSOC and the United Nations

¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/423)*. 2019.

² Ibid.

³ United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014

⁴ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2018/2)*. 2018.

⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Commission on Population and Development*. N.d.

⁶ Ibid.; United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Resolution 3 (III) Population Commission (E/RES/3 (III))*. 1946. p. 1.

⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/RES/49/128)*. 1994; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Commission on Population and Development*. N.d.

⁸ United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014. pp. viii-xiii.



system as a whole.⁹

- CPD **will not generally**: request individual Member States or NGOs to take certain action; take direct action to address the identified issues.¹⁰

Governance, Funding and Structure

The Commission comprises 47 members elected to serve four-year terms following a specific geographic distribution, with 12 seats for African states, 11 Asian-Pacific states, five Eastern European states, nine Latin American and Caribbean states, and 10 Western European and Other states.¹¹ The Commission meets annually in New York City, while the Bureau of CPD holds inter-sessional meetings to prepare for the annual meetings.¹²

The general administration of CPD is funded by the United Nations, but the Commission has also welcomed Member States and government agencies to provide support to its work.¹³ General Assembly resolution 50/124 on “Implementation of the PoA of the International Conference on Population and Development” (1996) encouraged voluntary donations from Member States, particularly developed states, to ensure that the goals in the follow-up of ICPD could be met.¹⁴

Both CPD and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) were tasked with following up on the PoA.¹⁵ CPD was designed to fully support ECOSOC and play the primary role in the follow-up process with its three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism, which includes monitoring, reviewing and assessing the implementation of the ICPD PoA.¹⁶ On the other hand, UNFPA, as a subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly, was mandated to take the lead in helping countries carry out the PoA by providing technical support and guidance with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights.¹⁷

⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/RES/49/128)*. 1994; United Nations, Conference on Population and Development. *Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on Population and Development (E/CN.9/2016/8)*. 2016.

¹⁰ United Nations, Conference on Population and Development. *Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on Population and Development (E/CN.9/2016/8)*. 2016.

¹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/RES/50/124)*. 1996; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Commission on Population and Development*. N.d.; New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2024-25*. 2024.

¹² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Commission on Population and Development, fifty-eighth session (2025)*. N.d.

¹³ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Report on the forty-seventh session (E/CN.9/2014/7)*. 2014.

¹⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/RES/50/124)*. 1996. p. 4.

¹⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/RES/49/128)*. 1994; United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014.

¹⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/RES/49/128)*. 1994. p. 5.

¹⁷ United Nations Population Fund. *How We Work*. 2024; United Nations Population Fund. *International Conference on Population and Development Principle of the ICPD*. 2024.



UNFPA will continue to accelerate the implementation process of the PoA at the operational level.¹⁸ In contrast, CPD monitors and assesses the progress made from a policy perspective.¹⁹ CPD also focuses on acknowledging major achievements towards this goal and drawing attention to areas that need improvement.²⁰

¹⁸ Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services. *The UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025*. 2021. p. 23.

¹⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Recurrent themes and key elements identified during the sessions of the Commission on Population and Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/122)*. 2014. p. 20.

²⁰ Ibid.



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<http://undocs.org/en/E/CN.9/2018/2>

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<https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/events/CPD58>

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/423)*. 2019. Retrieved 27 October 2024 from:

https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2019_Highlights.pdf

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[http://undocs.org/en/E/RES/3%20\(III\)](http://undocs.org/en/E/RES/3%20(III))

United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Report on the forty-seventh session (E/CN.9/2014/7)*. 2014. Retrieved 27 October 2024 from:

<http://undocs.org/en/E/CN.9/2014/7>

United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/RES/49/128)*. 1994. Retrieved 27 October 2024 from:

<http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/49/128>

United Nations, General Assembly. *Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/RES/50/124)*. 1996. Retrieved 27 October 2024 from:

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Retrieved 27 October 2024 from: <http://undocs.org/en/A/69/122>



United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014. Retrieved 27 October 2024 from: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/programme_of_action_Web%20ENGLISH.pdf

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1. 30 Year Review on Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

*"The 30th anniversary of ICPD is an important moment to not only recognize our achievements, but to take stock of the substantial work there is left to do."*²¹

Introduction

Global population growth has accelerated dramatically in recent decades.²² In 2022, the world population reached 8 billion.²³ This presents an increase of 2.5 billion people compared to 1994.²⁴ The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) predicts that the global population will continue to increase to a peak of 10.3 billion in the 2080s before starting to decline.²⁵ Similarly, the number of people aged 60 and older is set to increase as birth rates fall, with potentially 1.4 billion older persons by 2030, posing challenges for long-term sustainable development and economic stability.²⁶ The World Health Organization (WHO) projects that by 2050, 80% of the world's older adults will reside in low-to-middle-income countries.²⁷ These population dynamics, which refer to the study of population change over time, have led Member States to introduce policy measures, such as establishing fertility targets or the limiting of reproductive rights.²⁸

However, global population growth and demographic change can also present opportunities for societies.²⁹ The demographic dividend refers to economic growth that could potentially occur when there is a surplus in people of working age, between 15 to 64 years old, in a population.³⁰ With the ongoing population growth, this dividend will grow worldwide this century, potentially benefiting many disadvantaged Member States by providing them with the opportunity for rapid economic growth and advancements in health, education, and gender equality.³¹

²¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Adoption: Netherlands*. N.d.

²² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations expert group meeting on assessing the status of implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda during the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*. 2023. p. 3.

²³ Ibid. p. 3.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 3.

²⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN Projects World Population to Peak Within This Century*. 2024.

²⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results*. 2022. p. 2; World Health Organization. *National programmes for age-friendly cities and communities: A guide*. 2023. p. 9.

²⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Leaving No One Behind In An Ageing World*. 2023. pp. 23-24; United Nations, World Health Organization. *Ageing and health*. 2022.

²⁸ United Nations Population Fund. *Demographic Change and Sustainability*. 2024. p. 2.

²⁹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 17.

³⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Global Population Growth and Sustainable Development*. 2022. p. 9; United Nations Population Fund. *Demographic Dividend*. 2024.

³¹ Ibid.



Least developed countries (LDCs) are key drivers of future global population growth.³² This trend will be especially pronounced in Africa, where the majority of LDCs are located and the median age is 17 years.³³ LDCs currently have a combined population of approximately 1.2 billion people.³⁴ They also represent nearly half of the projected global population growth between 2024 and 2050, increasing the need for investment in infrastructure, health, and economic development.³⁵ Climate change and the pursuit for more stable regions will exacerbate these challenges, driving both internal and international migration due to climate-related disasters disproportionately affecting LDCs.³⁶ The lack of clear legal definitions and protections for migrants, refugees, and climate refugees leads to fewer protections for these groups.³⁷ According to the International Organization for Migration's (IOM), nearly 62,000 migrant deaths have been recorded worldwide since 2014.³⁸

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA) is the central United Nations framework for mainstreaming population issues into policy making at national, regional, and international levels.³⁹ It is the culmination of a long line of international documents centered on linking population issues to development, while prioritizing individual choice in population policy.⁴⁰ The ICPD PoA is rooted in universally recognized human rights, and outlines action areas in population and development across 16 chapters.⁴¹ Since 1994, the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) has been tasked with reviewing and supporting the implementation of the ICPD PoA every five years.⁴² Although the ICPD PoA initially outlined their goals for a 20-year period, Member States extended their commitment beyond 2015 after the 2014 General Assembly special session.⁴³ Five key pillars were incorporated to guide the ICPD PoA beyond 2014: human rights, health, mobility, transparent governance, and sustainability.⁴⁴

³² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations: Tracking Demographic Change Among the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States*. 2024. p. 5.

³³ United Nations Population Fund. *Demographic Change and Sustainability*. 2024. p. 3.

³⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations: Tracking Demographic Change Among the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States*. 2024. p. 5.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 5.

³⁶ United Nations Population Fund. *ICPD30 Brief: ICPD and Climate Action*. 2024. p. 4.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 4.

³⁸ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues: International Migration*. N.d.

³⁹ United Nations Population Fund. *30-Year Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD*. N.d; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Conferences | Population*. N.d; United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development: 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014.

⁴⁰ United Nations Population Fund. *ICPD Overview*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Commission on Population and Development*. N.d.

⁴¹ United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development: 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014.

⁴² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Commission on Population and Development*. N.d.

⁴³ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Framework of action for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 (E/CN.9/2014/4)*. 2014. p. 7.

⁴⁴ Ibid.



International and Regional Framework

The ICPD PoA builds on the historic work of United Nations conferences addressing population dynamics and development.⁴⁵ The World Population Conferences evolved from focusing on demographic changes and data collection to addressing broader connections between socio-economic development and demographic trends.⁴⁶ The third conference culminated with the adoption of the World Population Plan of Action (1974), which evolved from focusing on demographic changes and data collection to addressing broader connections between socio-economic development and demographic trends.⁴⁷ This plan was expanded at the International Conference on Population (1984) to include current data, and specified human rights, health, employment, and education as key issues.⁴⁸ This led to the first ICPD (1994) that adopted the ICPD PoA, building off of the World Population Plan of Action with a larger scope and greater emphasis on rights-based approaches to population and development.⁴⁹

A human rights-based approach to development is foundational to the ICPD PoA.⁵⁰ In 1948, the General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), which recognizes the right for individuals to make decisions regarding their family, and the right to standards of living and social protections for women and children.⁵¹ In 1966, the General Assembly adopted the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which recognizes sexual and reproductive health as part of the right to health.⁵² This marked a shift in population discourse towards a rights-based approach, such that family planning became a way of empowering women through autonomy in reproductive health.⁵³ The relationship between gender equality and population development was further expanded in 1979 when the General Assembly adopted the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, which emphasizes that the participation of women and men on equal terms is central for global welfare and peace.⁵⁴ The connection between gender equality and development informs the ICPD PoA's rights-based approach to issues relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women, and the role, structure, and rights of families.⁵⁵

⁴⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Conferences | Population*. N.d.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ United Nations Population Fund. *30-Year Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Conferences | Population*. N.d ; United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014.

⁵⁰ United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development: 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014. p.176.

⁵¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

⁵² United Nations Population Fund. *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: An Essential Element of Universal Health Coverage*. 2019. p.15; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

⁵³ United Nations Population Fund. *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: An Essential Element of Universal Health Coverage*. 2019. p. 15.

⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979.

⁵⁵ United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development: 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014. p. 176.



Migration is a key component of the ICPD PoA.⁵⁶ Chapters nine and ten of the ICPD PoA address macro population trends, such as population growth, internal migration, and international migration.⁵⁷ In 2016, the General Assembly adopted the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, in response to increasing global migration.⁵⁸ This declaration set out to develop the *Global Compact on Refugees* and the *Global Compact for Safe and Orderly Migration*, which were both adopted in 2018.⁵⁹ The *Global Compact on Refugees* establishes a framework for responsibility and international cooperation to support refugees and host communities, while the *Global Compact for Migration* aims to reduce barriers to sustainable livelihoods in migrants' home countries, and limit risks to migrants in different stages of migration.⁶⁰ ICPD's 30 year review (ICPD30), overseen by CPD, has highlighted the overlap in the *Global Compact for Migration's* objectives and the ICPD PoA in establishing rights-based approaches for addressing migration.⁶¹

The ICPD PoA supports sustainable development.⁶² These discussions built on the original 16 chapters of the ICPD PoA and were further reflected with *2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) in 2015.⁶³ The 2030 Agenda outlined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030.⁶⁴ Following this, CPD aligned future reviews of the ICPD PoA toward fulfilling the mandate of the SDGs such as SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).⁶⁵ ICPD30 builds on regional reviews and frameworks and has highlighted key areas for action on sexual and reproductive health and impacts of climate change that intersect with SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing) and SDG 13 (climate action).⁶⁶

Role of the International System

CPD is the primary United Nations body on population matters and is tasked with implementing the ICPD PoA and organizing discussions around ICPD30.⁶⁷ CPD supports the implementation of the ICPD PoA by monitoring and reviewing progress on key areas, like sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR),

⁵⁶ United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development: 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014. p. 176.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 176.

⁵⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*. 2016.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/RES/73/151)*. 2018; United Nations, General Assembly. *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195)*. 2018.

⁶¹ Zohry. *Human mobility between the Cairo Programme of Action and The Global Compact for Migration: Did we Miss the Point?*. 2023.

⁶² United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development Goals: The Importance of Monitoring*. N.d.

⁶³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development Goals: The Importance of Monitoring*. N.d; United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (E/CN.9/2014/4)*. 2014. p. 7.

⁶⁶ United Nations Population Fund. *The Future of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*. 2024.

⁶⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Commission on Population and Development*. N.d.



women's bodily autonomy, and access to family planning.⁶⁸ For ICPD30, key policy topics include addressing persistent gaps in access to contraceptives, reducing unintended pregnancies, and improving women's decision-making on healthcare and sex, especially in regions like sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.⁶⁹ ICPD30 also focuses on demographic shifts, such as aging populations and migration patterns.⁷⁰ These topics are especially salient for LDCs, where fertility rates and maternal mortality remain critical challenges.⁷¹ Shared responsibilities between developed and developing nations is one of the ways Member States hope to address these intersectional population challenges at ICPD30.⁷²

Since CPD is focused on review, advice, and framework, it is supported by other functional organs of the United Nations that help fulfill the mandate of the ICPD PoA.⁷³ Created in 1969, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is one of these organs that funds and implements the ICPD PoA by promoting universal access to SRHR for all people.⁷⁴ UNFPA collaborates with diverse partners, including Member States, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations (CSOs), to achieve its mission through state-led efforts.⁷⁵ These efforts emphasize local implementation, mutual accountability, and improved alignment.⁷⁶ UNFPA emphasizes a human-rights based approach through its three transformative targets of zero preventable maternal death, zero gender-based violence, and zero unmet need for family planning.⁷⁷ To help achieve the goals set in the ICPD PoA, UNFPA participates in the United Nations Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, by conducting joint evaluations and monitoring groups.⁷⁸ These frameworks play a key role in guiding the planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of the efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.⁷⁹

As part of the United Nations Secretariat, DESA supports the international community by providing crucial population data and reports that allow for informed policy action.⁸⁰ Notable examples include the World Population Prospects report, which offers updated demographic statistics for global population trends from 1950 to 2024, with projections to 2100.⁸¹ This report focuses on the three largest components of

⁶⁸ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Provisional agenda (E/CN.9/2024/1)*. 2024. pp. 2-5.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024.

⁷³ United Nations Population Fund. *About Us*. 2024.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Background: World Population Day*. N.d.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ United Nations Population Fund. *Transformative Results*. 2024.

⁷⁸ United Nations Population Fund. *Annual Report on the Evaluation Function 2023*. 2023. p. 16.

⁷⁹ United Nations Sustainable Development Group. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance*. 2019.

⁸⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *About United Nations Population Division*. N.d; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations: Tracking Demographic Change Among the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States*. 2023. p. 4.

⁸¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Growing or shrinking? What the latest trends tell us about the world's population*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2024*. 2024.



population change: fertility, mortality, and migration.⁸² DESA assists in addressing these areas through supporting capacity building for predictive population policy in LDCs, actionable demographic projections, and compiling population data from diverse sources.⁸³ DESA regularly brings together such data in papers, such as the *Global Population Growth and Sustainable Development* report (2021), which highlights the importance of raising awareness about population trends to inform policy decisions at both the international and national levels.⁸⁴ DESA also serves the secretariat for CPD, assisting with selecting the yearly theme of CPD's meetings, organizing expert panels, and facilitating CSO participation on a regional level.⁸⁵

There are also other actors within the United Nations system and beyond that work to implement the ICPD PoA.⁸⁶ For SRHR, WHO helps with reproductive health and child mortality through direct action in LDCs, as well as providing reports for CPD.⁸⁷ WHO is also instrumental in the operation of the United Nations Special Programme on Human Reproduction to address sexual and reproductive health issues since 1972.⁸⁸ Other organizations that provide data, reports, and economic assistance for various population-related issues include the World Bank, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and IOM.⁸⁹ Regional programs also participate in the CPD review processes for the ICPD PoA, as well as establish their own objectives.⁹⁰ For example, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific identifies and works on addressing recent challenges prominent in Asia, including a slowdown in population growth, a shift to lower fertility and mortality rates, and increasing international migration.⁹¹ Similarly, the Economic Commission for Africa is tasked with overseeing a region with many LDCs, which together are experiencing the fastest population growth globally, with a need for economic development for a large population under the age of 30.⁹²

⁸² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *About United Nations Population Division*. N.d.; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations: Tracking Demographic Change Among the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States*. 2023. p. 4.

⁸³ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues: Population*. N.d.

⁸⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Global Population Growth and Sustainable Development*. 2022.

⁸⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Secretariat Note on Future Role and Organization of the Commission on Population and Development*. 2020. pp. 2-5.

⁸⁶ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *World Population Day: Background*. N.d.

⁸⁷ World Health Organization. *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research Overview*. 2024; World Health Organization. *Women on the move: migration, care work and health*. 2017.

⁸⁸ World Health Organization. *UN Special Programme for Research on Sexual and Reproductive Health Celebrates 50 Years*. 2023.

⁸⁹ International Organization on Migration. *Effects of Climate Mobility on Women and Girls in the MENA Region*. 2024. p.5; Sai et al. *The World Bank's Role in Shaping Third World Population Policy*. 1990; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *How Migration is a Gender Equality Issue*. 2020.

⁹⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Mission*. N.d.

⁹¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations expert group meeting on assessing the status of implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda during the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*. 2023. p. 9.

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 10.



Gender Equality, Population Dynamics, and Migration

Population dynamics are impacted by trends in gender equality and migration central to the ICPD PoA.⁹³ Since the adoption of the ICPD PoA, the number of people living outside their state of birth has increased from 161 million in 1995 to 281 million in 2020, with women constituting 48% of international migrants.⁹⁴ According to DESA, safe, orderly, and regular migration can help nations with aging populations by contributing to the working population and easing financial pressures on healthcare systems.⁹⁵ Additionally, migrant women often contribute to the care sector and care needs of aging populations through informal employment.⁹⁶ Migrant women face unique challenges before, during, and after migration.⁹⁷

Women migrate for a variety of reasons, including economic opportunities and climate disruptions.⁹⁸ According to a 2024 report by IOM, drivers for women's migration include conflict and environmental degradation.⁹⁹ Barriers to education and higher wages are also common drivers of migration for women seeking economic opportunities.¹⁰⁰ While global progress towards bridging gender gaps in education has been achieved, approximately 130 million girls still faced barriers to education as of 2023.¹⁰¹ Women who possess higher education migrate in pursuit of higher wages in lower-skilled jobs, contributing to a larger trend of highly skilled workers migrating out of their home countries.¹⁰² Additionally, an emerging driver of migration is climate disruptions, such as droughts, which disproportionately impact women who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.¹⁰³ Notably, in the Middle East and North Africa region, extreme climate especially impacts women due to agriculture being the largest employer for women, and due to limited opportunities for women to pursue off-farm work.¹⁰⁴ For women migrating via sea routes, migration can increase economic and psychological pressures and a heightened risk of gender-based violence.¹⁰⁵

Migrant women often lack social protections even though they work and largely pay into social security systems in their destination countries.¹⁰⁶ Social protection includes SRHR, disability insurance, sick leave,

⁹³ United Nations Population Fund. *The Future of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*. 2024. p. 4

⁹⁴ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues: International Migration*. N.d.

⁹⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Why safe, orderly and regular migration matters for sustainable development*. 2022.

⁹⁶ World Health Organization. *Women on the move: migration, care work and health*. 2017.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ International Organization for Migration. *Effects of Climate Mobility on Women and Girls in the MENA Region*. 2024. p. 9.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 9.

¹⁰⁰ International Organization on Migration. *As Education Empowers Women, Migration Allows Them to Go to Where Opportunities Beckon*. 2024.

¹⁰¹ United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *The world is failing 130 million girls denied education: UN experts*. 2023.

¹⁰² International Organization on Migration. *As Education Empowers Women, Migration Allows Them to Go to Where Opportunities Beckon*. 2024.

¹⁰³ International Organization on Migration. *Effects of Climate Mobility on Women and Girls in the MENA Region*. 2024. p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. pp. 6-9.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *How Migration is a Gender Equality Issue*. 2020 ; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Why safe, orderly and regular migration matters for sustainable development*. 2022.



parental leave, pensions, and unemployment funds.¹⁰⁷ Only 22% of working migrants are covered by social protections in their destination state, with many unable to access healthcare and maternity protection.¹⁰⁸ The lack of protections are due to migrants' large participation in informal employment, reducing access to SRHR and placing them at greater risk during economic downturns.¹⁰⁹ This poses a barrier to achieving SDGs 3 (good health and well-being), 5 (gender equality), and 8 (decent work and economic growth) for migrant women who are more likely to work in the informal sector.¹¹⁰ The reviews from the ICPD30 highlight that despite progress, women's access to making SRHR decisions remains low and poses a challenge to the ICPD PoA's goal of improving access to social and economic opportunities for women, and welfare for migrants.¹¹¹

ICPD30 identified areas of improvement in the implementation of the ICPD PoA to address emerging challenges in women's migration.¹¹² UNFPA's evaluation of its support to population dynamics and data concluded that climate disruption and migration present emerging challenges to the ICPD PoA.¹¹³ The report highlighted that migration and climate change issues have not been thoroughly incorporated or translated into practical actions in population and development in the current framework.¹¹⁴ Additionally, ICPD30 expert panels have emphasized that gender-disaggregated migration data, clarification of gender-related terminology, and distinction between different types of migration are important for improving the ICPD PoA's implementation.¹¹⁵ At the Summit of the Future, the General Assembly adopted *The Pact for the Future* (2024).¹¹⁶ The Pact reaffirms commitment to ensuring universal SRHR in alignment with the ICPD PoA, and commitment to address drivers of irregular migration.¹¹⁷

Improving Data Collection to Ensure Rights-based Approaches

CPD's support to the implementation of the ICPD PoA based on principles of equality, universal human rights, and non-discrimination.¹¹⁸ A rights-based approach to population policy emphasizes the human rights of all individuals, prioritizing their participation and empowerment while focusing on marginalized groups to ensure that development focuses on respect, protection, and equality.¹¹⁹ For example, in many LDCs, restrictive laws and social norms hinder access to SRHR, especially for marginalized groups, leading to high rates of unintended pregnancies and preventable maternal deaths.¹²⁰ Addressing these

¹⁰⁷ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *How Migration is a Gender Equality Issue*. 2020.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹¹¹ United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development: 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014. pp. 30-31, p.110; United Nations Population Fund. *The Future of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*. 2024. p. 7.

¹¹² United Nations Population Fund. *Evaluation of UNFPA Support to Population Dynamics and Data*. 2023. p. 35.

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 35.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 35.

¹¹⁵ Asis. *Back to the Future: Migration in the Context of Megatrends*. 2023.

¹¹⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1)*. 2024.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ United Nations Population Fund. *Climate Action and Population Dynamics*. 2024.

¹¹⁹ United Nations Population Fund. *Human Rights-Based Approach*. 2024.

¹²⁰ United Nations Population Fund. *The Future of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*. 2024. p. 7.



barriers enhances women's decision-making power and offers significant economic returns, with UNFPA showing that every \$1 invested in family planning generates over \$8 in benefits.¹²¹

Understanding population trends through data collection is crucial for informed policy decisions.¹²² Significant progress has been made in improving SRHR in the last 30 years, with maternal mortality reduced from 369 to 211 per 100,000 live births between 1994 and 2017.¹²³ This improvement can be attributed to rights-based approaches that prioritize women's health and autonomy.¹²⁴ However, challenges remain, as over 200 million women in developing regions still lack access to modern contraceptives.¹²⁵ Fertility rates exemplify the complex interplay between data, rights, and development.¹²⁶ High fertility above 2.1 births per woman in many LDCs has led CPD to advocate for education and the right to develop women and girls, as highlighted in chapters 3 and 15 of the ICPD PoA.¹²⁷ Despite progress since 1994, significant economic disparities persist globally, disproportionately affecting women and girls.¹²⁸ This lack of autonomy and opportunity among women contributes to high fertility and rapid population growth.¹²⁹

On a macro scale, high fertility can create a demographic dividend, potentially propelling many LDCs toward rapid economic development as the proportion of working-age people increases relative to dependents.¹³⁰ However, as economic and educational opportunities increase, many women will exercise their right not to have children, potentially dropping fertility below the replacement threshold of 2.1 children per woman and leading to economic stagnation.¹³¹ Recent projections by DESA indicate that by the late 2070s, the global population aged 65 and over is expected to exceed the number of people under 18, causing obstacles for sustainable development as the number of dependents begin to outnumber the

¹²¹ United Nations Population Fund. *The Future of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*. 2024. p. 7.

¹²² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Growing or shrinking? What the latest trends tell us about the world's population*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2024*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Global Population Growth and Sustainable Development*. 2022.

¹²³ United Nations Population Fund. *Universal Access to Reproductive Health: Progress and Challenges*. 2023. p. 18.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its Contributions to Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 17; United Nations Population Fund. *ICPD30 Brief: ICPD and Climate Action*. 2024.

¹²⁷ United Nations Population Fund. *ICPD30 Brief: ICPD and Climate Action*. 2024.

¹²⁸ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Framework of action for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 (E/CN.9/2014/4)*. 2014. pp. 4-5.

¹²⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Global Population Growth and Sustainable Development: Policy Brief*. 2022.

¹³⁰ United Nations Population Fund. *Demographic Dividend*. 2024.

¹³¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results*. 2022. p. 2; World Health Organization. *National programmes for age-friendly cities and communities: A guide*. 2023; United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Framework of action for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 (E/CN.9/2014/4)*. 2014. pp. 4-5.



working population, potentially hindering long term growth.¹³² This trend has led some Member States affected by low fertility to implement population targets to increase births and combat global aging, sometimes resorting to coercion.¹³³

In 2023, a DESA experts meeting reaffirmed that population policy must be addressed through a data-driven approach that preserves human rights.¹³⁴ Easy access to high-quality and disaggregated data is crucial for ensuring implementation of the ICPD PoA.¹³⁵ While population-related aid has predominantly focused on SRHR in recent years, funding for population data and policy analysis has decreased.¹³⁶ Increased data collection on population dynamics can create more inclusive systems of information usage, leading to improved policy changes across the globe by promoting people-centered development, particularly in LDCs.¹³⁷ Improved data systems can also help support rights-based approaches to population challenges.¹³⁸ As the global community has a more thorough understanding of population dynamics, data collection and analysis have become sought-after tools for governments.¹³⁹ This allows for effective responses to changing rates of fertility, mortality, and migration.¹⁴⁰ The UNFPA Population Data Portal is an example of how improved data systems can support rights-based approaches by providing accessible, comprehensive population information to policymakers and researchers.¹⁴¹ By balancing data-driven insights with a strong commitment to individual rights, the international community can work towards implementing the ICPD PoA in a way that respects human dignity while addressing global population challenges.¹⁴²

¹³² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Growing or Shrinking? What the Latest Trends Tell Us About the World's Population*. 2024.

¹³³ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its Contributions to Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 17.

¹³⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Assessing the Status of Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and its Contribution to the Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda During the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development*. 2023. p. 5.

¹³⁵ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 15.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 10.

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 19.

¹³⁸ Ibid. p. 15.

¹³⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations: Tracking Demographic Change Among the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States*. 2023. p. 4; United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its Contributions to Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations: Tracking Demographic Change Among the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States*. 2023. p. 4; United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its Contributions to Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 19.

¹⁴¹ United Nations Population Fund. *Evaluation of UNFPA Support to Population Dynamics and Data*. 2023.

¹⁴² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations: Tracking Demographic Change Among the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked*



Conclusion

The ICPD30 review highlights that despite significant progress, more work remains to improve the ICPD PoA's implementation.¹⁴³ So far, the review identified intersectional challenges presented by climate change, aging societies, and unequal access to SRHR.¹⁴⁴ CPD's multi-stakeholder reviews highlight the need to improve population data and incorporate migration and climate issues into population and development work, and practical action.¹⁴⁵ While the ICPD PoA has seen progress on issues of gender equality and SRHR since its adoption, additional collaboration and support will be necessary to sustain progress and address challenges to its implementation.¹⁴⁶

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic: How could the ICPD PoA better address intersectional challenges such as climate change, sustainable development, and global aging? How can Member States better coordinate increased population data collection and disaggregation for better policy-making? How can Member States provide women with opportunities for economic growth, bodily autonomy, and life-long health? Can unsustainable rates of fertility be solved while maintaining a rights-based approach? How can the demographic dividend best be utilized for rapid development while preventing eventual economic stagnation as a nation increases in overall age?

Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States. 2023. p. 4; United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its Contributions to Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 19.

¹⁴³ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 17.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations Population Fund. *The Future of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*. 2024.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its Contributions to Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.9/2024/4)*. 2024. p. 10; United Nations Population Fund. *Evaluation of UNFPA Support to Population Dynamics and Data*. 2023. p. 35.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations Population Fund. *The Future of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*. 2024. P. 26.



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2. Addressing Population Growth in Urban and Peri-Urban Areas

Introduction

As of 2024, more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas.¹⁴⁷ According to the current projections by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), this number is expected to further increase to around 70% by 2050.¹⁴⁸ Urban city dwellers are expected to account for the majority of the future growth of the human population.¹⁴⁹ Managing rapid urbanization is necessary to maximize the benefits of urban agglomeration.¹⁵⁰ An urban agglomeration refers to a densely populated area that extends beyond administrative boundaries, forming a continuous zone of urban development.¹⁵¹ It includes both urban and peri-urban areas.¹⁵² Peri-urban areas usually have a moderate population density and are at the transition between a rural area and a city or a town.¹⁵³ The United Nations Secretariat does not use a standard definition of "urban" or "peri-urban" but instead uses a method called the degree of urbanization.¹⁵⁴ It categorizes the territory of a country into three classes along the urban-rural continuum: cities, towns and semi-dense areas, and rural areas, which has two further extensions that detail territorial typology and define functional urban areas.¹⁵⁵

Urbanization, if managed successfully, will positively contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and overall economic growth.¹⁵⁶ Urbanization is closely related to the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainable development.¹⁵⁷ Cities serve as development hubs, having a younger, well-educated population and necessary infrastructure facilitating innovation.¹⁵⁸ Urban centers are vital for national economies, with cities and metropolitan areas driving global trade and production.¹⁵⁹ Whether resource-based, consumption-based, or knowledge-driven, economies increasingly depend on the clustering and connectivity offered by urban centers.¹⁶⁰ City residents report an overall higher quality of life, benefiting from higher income and access to technology and services.¹⁶¹

¹⁴⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*. 2024. p. 30.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 30.

¹⁴⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision (ST/ESA/SER.A/420)*. 2018. p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 1.

¹⁵¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Urbanization Prospects 2018: Frequently Asked Questions*. 2018.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ United Nations, Statistical Commission. *A recommendation on the method to delineate cities, urban and rural areas for international statistical comparisons*. 2020. p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision (ST/ESA/SER.A/420)*. 2018. p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 1.

¹⁵⁹ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2020*. 2020. p. xix.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. p. xix.

¹⁶¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development et al. *Cities in the World: A New Perspective on Urbanisation*. 2020. p. 10.



The level of urbanization is not uniform throughout the world, leading to urban policy challenges.¹⁶² In developing regions, 52% of the population currently lives in urban areas, with this number expected to rise to 66% by 2050, primarily driven by rapid urbanization in Africa and Asia.¹⁶³ These regions face significant challenges in managing rapid urbanization due to weak planning systems, governance structures, and rising inequality.¹⁶⁴ Latin America and the Caribbean, already 81% urbanized, feature some of the world's largest megacities but continue to grapple with high-income inequality.¹⁶⁵ Africa, though the least urbanized region (44%), is experiencing the fastest urban growth, which is projected to continue despite economic and governance challenges.¹⁶⁶ Unlike other developing regions, many African countries are witnessing urbanization at lower income levels.¹⁶⁷ In Asia, urbanization is primarily driven by rural-urban migration.¹⁶⁸ Urbanization is also strongly linked to economic transitions and global economic integration as Asian cities have become markets for foreign direct investments and manufacturing outsourcing.¹⁶⁹

By contrast, developed regions have 79% of the population currently living in urban areas, a figure expected to rise to 87% by 2050.¹⁷⁰ Despite high urbanization levels, the rate of urban population growth is slow and even negative in some countries, with a projected annual growth rate of 0.46% between 2020 and 2025.¹⁷¹ About one-third of urban expansions in these regions are accounted for by international migration from developing countries.¹⁷² With the increase in population in developing countries, international migration is projected to continue in the future, creating challenges in developed countries such as migration pressure and exclusion and marginalization of migrants.¹⁷³

International and Regional Framework

The *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development* (ICPD PoA) (1994) identifies urbanization as a key aspect of economic and social development and calls attention to the consequences of the rapid pace of urbanization.¹⁷⁴ The ICPD PoA highlights inadequate government management capacity, inequitable allocation of resources, and migration as key challenges that need to be addressed in urbanization.¹⁷⁵ The ICPD PoA recognizes the large increase in population sizes and emphasizes the importance of considering consumption and production patterns in all development policies to ensure sustainable development.¹⁷⁶ To achieve a balanced distribution of population across different regions, the ICPD PoA outlines sustainable regional development strategies, including promoting

¹⁶² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision (ST/ESA/SER.A/420)*. 2018. p. 12.

¹⁶³ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2020*. 2020. p. 14.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 14.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 14.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 14.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 14.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 14.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 14.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 10.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p. 10.

¹⁷² Ibid. p. 10.

¹⁷³ Ibid. pp. 10 - 11.

¹⁷⁴ United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development: 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014. p. 95.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 95.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 17.



the growth of small and medium-sized urban centers, and enhancing the sustainable development of rural areas.¹⁷⁷

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) highlights the importance of urbanization in sustainable development and seeks to address population growth in urban and peri-urban areas.¹⁷⁸ SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) highlights the need to plan and build sustainable cities to accommodate the world's growing urban population.¹⁷⁹ SDG targets 11.1, 11.2, and 11.6 focus on reducing the proportion of urban populations living in slums, providing accessible transport, and reducing the per capita environmental impact of cities.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, with health being an essential component of sustainable urbanization, SDG 3 (good health and well-being) emphasizes the need to promote health and well-being at all ages with targets to increase access to reproductive health services and reduce illnesses and death from pollution.¹⁸¹ SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure) includes sustainable industrialization, resilient infrastructure, and resource efficiency which are key priorities for the future of cities.¹⁸² SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) calls for income growth of the bottom 40% of the population and eliminating social and political inequalities including tackling the widespread urban poverty and inequality.¹⁸³

The *New Urban Agenda* (NUA) (2016) identifies cities as a solution to sustainable development and provides guidelines and policy recommendations for urban planning.¹⁸⁴ The NUA was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), building on the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.¹⁸⁵ Social inclusion, ending poverty, inclusive urban prosperity, and sustainable and resilient urban development were among the transformative commitments for sustainable urban development and SDG progress agreed by Member States under the Quito Plan of Implementation for the NUA.¹⁸⁶ The NUA calls to promote resilient infrastructure in urban areas in line with the guidelines set by the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* (2015) and SDG target 9.1 to develop quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure.¹⁸⁷ The NUA further emphasizes the role of national urban policies, urban legislation and regulations, and local implementation in urban development.¹⁸⁸ The NUA also advocates for integrated and balanced territorial development policies that enhance cooperation among cities, strengthen peri-urban areas, and improve food security.¹⁸⁹

¹⁷⁷ United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development: 20th Anniversary Edition*. 2014. p. 97.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 9.

¹⁷⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*. N.d.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 16; United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2020*. 2020. p. 213.

¹⁸² Ibid. p. 20; Ibid. p. xv.

¹⁸³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 21.

¹⁸⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016. p. iv.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. pp. 11-22.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 21.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.



Urban areas play a vital role in achieving the climate change mitigation targets set by the *Paris Agreement* (2015).¹⁹⁰ The *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (1994) initiated the process, which led to the *Kyoto Protocol* (1997) and the *Paris Agreement* (2015).¹⁹¹ The *Paris Agreement* is a legally binding international treaty, which seeks to limit global warming to well below 2°C before pre-industrial global temperatures.¹⁹² The *Paris Agreement* encourages cities to increase their efforts in reducing greenhouse emissions, building resilience, and adapting to the adverse effects of climate change.¹⁹³ It also highlights that cities can play a vital role in establishing a platform to share experiences and best practices in climate change action.¹⁹⁴ Urban activities are major contributors to climate change, while cities themselves are increasingly vulnerable to its growing impacts and the effects of pollution.¹⁹⁵

Role of the International System

The Commission on Population Development (CPD) discusses issues related to population growth in urban and peri-urban areas.¹⁹⁶ CPD first addressed population growth in urban areas when it adopted its resolution 2008/1 on “Population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development.”¹⁹⁷ In this resolution, CPD recommended Member States to address the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities created by urbanization and internal migration on economic growth, poverty reduction, and sustainability.¹⁹⁸ In 2018, CPD’s session focused on “Sustainable cities, human mobility, and international migration,” where Member States discussed the link between urbanization and migration and ways to mitigate negative consequences associated with them through the provision of health care, data collection, and facilitating safe and orderly migration.¹⁹⁹ Urbanization and migration were once again discussed as part of its review of the ICPD PoA at the 52nd session in 2019.²⁰⁰ More recently, in 2021, Member States discussed food security in urban areas, highlighting the nutritional needs of the urban poor.²⁰¹ At the 57th session in 2024, CPD discussed the status of the implementation of the ICPD PoA and its contribution to the SDGs, including the challenges posed by urbanization.²⁰²

¹⁹⁰ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Urbanization in the Paris Agreement*. 2017. p. 3.

¹⁹¹ United Nations Climate Change. *About the secretariat*. 2024.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015. p. 53; United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Urbanization in the Paris Agreement*. 2017. p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Urbanization in the Paris Agreement*. 2017. p. 3.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Commission on Population and Development*. N.d.

¹⁹⁷ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development (Resolution 2008/1)*. 2008. p. 4.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁹⁹ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Report on the fifty-first session (E/CN.9/2018/7)*. 2018. pp. 3 - 4.

²⁰⁰ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Report on the fifty-second session (E/CN.9/2019/6)*. 2019. p. 3.

²⁰¹ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Report on the fifty-fourth session (E/CN.9/2021/6)*. 2021. p. 3.

²⁰² United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Report on the fifty-seventh session (E/CN.9/2024/6)*. 2024. p. 6.



Within the United Nations Secretariat, DESA provides insights into urbanization issues at the intersection of sustainable development.²⁰³ The Population Division of DESA collects and analyzes data on population characteristics and provides support to CPD on population and development issues.²⁰⁴ DESA regularly publishes reports that provide estimates and projections of the world's population as well as urban and rural demographic data.²⁰⁵ The 2024 revision of the *World Population Prospects* report provides comprehensive data on global population trends and recommendations to countries based on the projected timing of their population peak.²⁰⁶ The 2018 revision of the *World Urbanization Prospects* report presents major population trends for urban and rural areas and patterns of city growth, categorizing countries by development groups, geographic regions, and income groups.²⁰⁷ The Population Division also published the *Global Population and Sustainable Development* report in 2021, which analyzes the intersection of population growth and sustainable development.²⁰⁸ The report highlights the importance of population growth in sustainable development and examines the drivers, socioeconomic consequences, and environmental impacts of population growth.²⁰⁹

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is a United Nations agency primarily working to ensure sexual and reproductive rights and choices for all.²¹⁰ In the urbanization context, UNFPA is tasked with ensuring that marginalized communities have access to sexual and reproductive health services in urban slums.²¹¹ UNFPA also works to engage young people in shaping the urbanization process through capacity-building programs.²¹² Further, UNFPA is a key agency that provides financial and technical assistance in conducting censuses and collecting data relating to urban population needs to help shape effective policies.²¹³ Addressing gender inequality and eradicating gender-based violence are also important goals that UNFPA works towards.²¹⁴

Identifying the need for sustainable urban development, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) conducts research, provides recommendations, and addresses the challenges of urbanization.²¹⁵ UN-Habitat regularly publishes data on urban demographics through *The World Cities Report*, earlier named *State of the World's Cities*.²¹⁶ The *World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities* examines existing population trends and challenges to provide ways to make cities sustainable.²¹⁷ UN-Habitat hosts the World Urban Forum, a technical forum held every two years since 2002, that examines the economic, environmental, and policy impact of urbanization and is attended by

²⁰³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *About Us*. 2024.

²⁰⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results (UN DESA/POP/2024/TR/NO. 9)*. 2024. p. 7.

²⁰⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2024*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Urbanization Prospects 2018*. 2018.

²⁰⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results (UN DESA/POP/2024/TR/NO. 9)*. 2024. p. 7.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. p. xix.

²⁰⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Global Population Growth and Sustainable Development*. 2021. p. 1.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. pp. 1 - 3.

²¹⁰ United Nations Population Fund. *About Us*. 2024.

²¹¹ United Nations Population Fund. *Urbanization*. 2024.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ United Nations Population Fund. *Census*. 2024.

²¹⁴ United Nations Population Fund. *Urbanization*. 2024.

²¹⁵ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *About Us*. 2024.

²¹⁶ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *About WUF*. 2024.

²¹⁷ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report*. 2022.



governments, civil representatives, businesses, and urban planners.²¹⁸ In 2022, the 11th session of the World Urban Forum took place in Poland with a focus on strengthening relationships and developing policies to improve urban environments in line with SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), while also tracking progress on local actions since the adoption of the NUA in 2016.²¹⁹ The 12th session took place in November 2024 in Cairo, Egypt.²²⁰

The United Nations regional commissions play a key role in advancing regional development, including a focus on addressing population growth in urban areas.²²¹ The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific identifies the spontaneous and underregulated growth of cities in the Asia-Pacific region as requiring urgent action.²²² Unsustainable production and consumption in these regions, coupled with unplanned urbanization, raises pressure on natural resources and increases income inequality.²²³ Similarly, the Urbanization and Development Section of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa focuses on urban job creation, raising the productivity of cities, and integrating urban development into regional policies.²²⁴ The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean regularly discusses urbanization issues, including urban development, climate change mitigation in cities, and sustainable financing for Latin American and Caribbean cities.²²⁵

Sustainable Urbanization and Peri-Urbanization

The world is growing increasingly urban, often beyond the capacity of existing urban infrastructure.²²⁶ By contrast, the Secretary-General's report on sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration (E/CN.9/2018/2) found well-managed urbanization can improve the quality of life via increased access to education, health care, and housing.²²⁷ In its report *The World Populations Prospects 2024*, DESA recommends countries in the Asia-Pacific region and the African continent, where populations are projected to peak in the next 30 years, implement policies to capitalize on the demographic dividend.²²⁸ The demographic dividend refers to the potential for economic growth when a larger portion of the population is of working age (15 to 64) compared to those who are younger or older.²²⁹

²¹⁸ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *About WUF*. 2024.

²¹⁹ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Urban Forum 11 Report*. 2022. p. 8.

²²⁰ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *WUF12*. 2024.

²²¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Regional Commissions*. N.d.

²²² United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific et al. *Urban and Peri-Urban Development*. 2020. p. 1.

²²³ Ibid. p. 1.

²²⁴ United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Urbanization and Development Section*. 2024.

²²⁵ United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. *Sustainable development and human settlements*. 2024.

²²⁶ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Assessing the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/2)*. 2024. p.14.

²²⁷ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2018/2)*. 2018. p. 16.

²²⁸ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results (UN DESA/POP/2024/TR/NO. 9)*. 2024. p. 36.

²²⁹ Ibid. p. 36.



Up to 90% of urban growth until 2050 is forecasted to occur in developing countries.²³⁰ Rapid urbanization has led to a global increase in populations living in slums.²³¹ Globally, 1.1 billion people live in slums or informal settlements, primarily in developing countries.²³² Informal settlements are residential areas lacking access to water, access to sanitation, durable housing, have no security of housing through formal agreements, and face overcrowding.²³³ Slums are the most deprived form of informal settlements facing poverty and dilapidated housing.²³⁴ Rapidly expanding cities, notably in developing countries, face poor or insufficient transport infrastructure.²³⁵ In 2023, UN-Habitat published a report, titled *Rescuing SDG 11 for a Resilient Urban Planet*, which highlights that almost all targets of SDG 11 will not be met by 2030 without major policy shifts in urban development.²³⁶ Access to transit in urban and peri-urban areas also increases access to formal employment, increasing economic security for populations while decreasing reliance on informal employment.²³⁷ Development sectors, such as public transportation, building efficiency and waste management, can yield up to \$17 trillion in energy savings for cities globally by 2050.²³⁸ Urban populations in developing countries face decreased standards of living due to uncontrolled urban growth, as public services and infrastructure capabilities cannot match the needs of the population.²³⁹ Greater access to formal employment can stimulate GDP growth and reduce the economic precarity of the urban poor by increasing access to work opportunities with better wages.²⁴⁰

Urbanization is accompanied by several challenges, such as a lack of adequate housing, natural resources, and jobs, among others.²⁴¹ Poverty and inequality remain persistent challenges, with a majority of the urban poor living in small cities and towns in developing countries.²⁴² The large population growth in urban areas calls for the addition of sustainable jobs and the development of infrastructure including housing, transportation, water, and sanitation.²⁴³ Urban sprawl, pollution, and environmental degradation

²³⁰ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Assessing the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/2)*. 2024. p.14.

²³¹ United Nations Population Fund. *Urbanization*. N.d.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *The Urban SDG Monitoring Series 1. Monitoring SDG Indicator 11.1.1*. 2019. p. 4.

²³⁴ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Issue Paper on Informal Settlements*. 2015. p. 1.

²³⁵ World Bank Group. *Investing in Public Transit Systems Can Empower Workers and Transform Urban Economies, New Research Shows*. 2022.

²³⁶ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Rescuing SDG 11 for a Resilient Urban Planet: Executive Summary*. 2023. p. 3.

²³⁷ World Bank Group. *Investing in Public Transit Systems Can Empower Workers and Transform Urban Economies, New Research Shows*. 2022.

²³⁸ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Sustainable Urbanization in the Paris Agreement*. 2017. p. 5.

²³⁹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World*. 2020. pp. 122-123.

²⁴⁰ World Bank Group. *Investing in Public Transit Systems Can Empower Workers and Transform Urban Economies, New Research Shows*. 2022.

²⁴¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016. p. 3.

²⁴² United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2022*. 2022. p. 11.

²⁴³ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific et al. *Urban and Peri-Urban Development*. 2020. pp. 2 - 3.



caused by poorly managed urbanization can also compromise sustainability in urban areas.²⁴⁴ Climate change poses a threat to cities, with cities in low-lying regions experiencing a rise in sea level and at the risk of flooding.²⁴⁵

Urban areas consume up to 75% of the world's natural resources, the majority coming from rural and peri-urban areas.²⁴⁶ To promote sustainable urban and peri-urban resource use, the NUA calls for increased linkages and sustainable transport infrastructure between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, unmanaged growth in peri-urban and urban areas can strain existing resources such as water availability.²⁴⁸ Furthermore, unmanaged urban growth can reduce available agricultural land, which in turn drives more migration to peri-urban areas, exacerbating urban sprawl.²⁴⁹ Urban land use has exceeded urban population growth by 50%, negatively impacting the environment as urban areas grow.²⁵⁰ By contrast, global peri-urban land use has doubled, and global peri-urban populations expanded by almost 22% over the past 25 years.²⁵¹ Urban areas are susceptible to heat islands when structures absorb and retain heat.²⁵² Urban heat islands cause increased energy consumption due to the increased use of cooling technologies and negatively impact the urban living environment.²⁵³ Furthermore, the heat island effect disproportionately negatively impacts poorer areas of urban centers and leads to negative impacts on the health of urban populations.²⁵⁴

Managed sustainable urban planning can prevent the heat island effect, reduce urban energy demand, and decrease negative heat impacts on urban populations.²⁵⁵ Action 9.8 of the ICPD PoA calls for Member States to focus on land management and prevent rapid urbanization.²⁵⁶ During its 51st session, CPD found that policies were needed for sustainable land use while providing inclusive access to services for vulnerable urban populations.²⁵⁷ In this context, improved and disaggregated data can help foster sound public policies towards sustainable urbanization.²⁵⁸ However, the multifaceted nature of urban

²⁴⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision (ST/ESA/SER.A/420)*. 2018. p. 1.

²⁴⁵ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2022*. 2022. p. 14.

²⁴⁶ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Urban Resilience Enhancer: Resource Efficiency*. 2019. p. 13.

²⁴⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016. p. 15.

²⁴⁸ Chen et al. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities. Water Stress, Peri-Urbanization, and Community-Based Water Systems: A Reflective Commentary on the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City*. 2022. p. 6-7.

²⁴⁹ Alverio et al. United States Institute of Peace. *Displaced to Cities: Conflict, Climate Change, and Rural-to-Urban Migration*. 2023. p. 11.

²⁵⁰ World Bank Group. *Urban Development*. 2024.

²⁵¹ Peri-Cene. *Peri-cene: summary for policy-makers*. 2022. p. 1.

²⁵² United States Environmental Protection Agency. *Reduce Urban Heat Island Effect*. 2024.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ World Bank Group. *Unlivable: What the Urban Heat Island Effect Means for East Asia's Cities*. 2023.

²⁵⁵ United States Environmental Protection Agency. *Reduce Urban Heat Island Effect*. 2024.

²⁵⁶ United Nations Population Fund. *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994*. 2004. p. 77.

²⁵⁷ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Presentation on the 51st session of the Commission on Population and Development*. 2018. p. 1.

²⁵⁸ Harris. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Closing Remarks at the 51st Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD)*. 2018.



growth and differing levels of growth capacity make gathering data on population growth difficult.²⁵⁹ CPD has called for more data on urbanization as it hinders the Commission's ability to study urbanization at an effective level.²⁶⁰

Urbanization and Climate Change

Urban areas are a major contributor to climate change and also a major consumer of energy.²⁶¹ 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions come from urban areas.²⁶² Additionally, urban areas consume 75% of global energy, most of which comes from non-renewable energy sources and fossil fuels.²⁶³ Rapid urbanization can lead to energy use beyond the capacity of energy infrastructure, leading to power outages for urban populations.²⁶⁴ Power outages can negatively impact vulnerable populations such as children and older adults.²⁶⁵ Power outages can cause vital medical devices to fail and lead to increased stress and anxiety.²⁶⁶ To ensure sustainable urban energy use, the World Bank and UN-Habitat have called for renewable and affordable energy production in urban areas.²⁶⁷ Initiatives, such as the United Nations Environment Programme's District Energy in Cities Initiative, which provides information sharing and policy support, help urban centers develop sustainable and efficient energy systems.²⁶⁸ During the 57th session, CPD stated that urban areas lead climate reforms due to the scale of urban economies.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, during this session, CPD stated that climate change was worsening inequalities and that the Programme of Action is vital to sustainable development.²⁷⁰

Climate change negatively impacts urban areas.²⁷¹ Vulnerable people and those living in informal settlements, such as slums, bear the brunt of the impact of climate change in urban areas.²⁷²

²⁵⁹ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 16-17; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision (ST/ESA/SER.A/420)*. 2018. p. 12.

²⁶⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Sustainable cities – gateways for people on the move*. N.d.

²⁶¹ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *Climate Change*. 2024; Andresen et al. *Environmental Research Letters* 18. *Understanding the social impacts of power outages in North America: a systematic review*. 2023. p. 8.

²⁶² International Energy Agency. *Empowering Urban Energy Transitions Smart cities and smart grids*. 2024.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Andresen et al. *Environmental Research Letters* 18. *Understanding the social impacts of power outages in North America: a systematic review*. 2023. p. 9.

²⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 10.

²⁶⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016. p. 17; World Bank Group. *Urban Development*. 2024.

²⁶⁸ District Energy in Cities Initiative. *Our Model*. N.d.

²⁶⁹ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 15.

²⁷⁰ Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 17.

²⁷¹ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2022*. 2022. p. 140.

²⁷² Ibid. p. 84.



The most vulnerable in urban areas suffer greater losses to their economic situation and quality of life when subjected to the negative impacts of climate change.²⁷³ Unmanaged urban population growth can exacerbate the impact of climate change on urban areas.²⁷⁴ Climate change can damage urban infrastructure via disasters such as floods, and populations living in informal settlements are vulnerable to climate shocks such as rising heat levels.²⁷⁵

Due to climate change, urban areas are facing increased risk from natural disasters.²⁷⁶ Between 1998 and 2017, climate-related disasters accounted for 90% of all major disasters.²⁷⁷ The urban poor and those living in informal settlements face the greatest risk from natural disasters.²⁷⁸ Climate change can also impact unmanaged urban growth as climate change increases migration to urban areas by climate refugees.²⁷⁹ While climate refugees generally are considered to be persons displaced due to environmental impacts, both natural and human-caused, including natural disasters, there is no universal definition set by international law.²⁸⁰ An estimated 60% of refugees live in urban areas globally.²⁸¹ As climate change continues, the amount of climate refugees in urban areas is likely to increase.²⁸² Climate refugees are more likely to live in slums, which are often in disaster-prone sections of urban areas.²⁸³ Additionally, the growth of peri-urban areas, which can result in the destruction of natural ecological barriers, can increase the risk urban centers face from natural disasters.²⁸⁴ The *Exposure and Vulnerability to Natural Disasters for World's Cities* explores the vulnerability to natural disasters for cities with at least 300,000 inhabitants and reports around 60% of cities had high exposure to one or more of the six natural hazards.²⁸⁵ These vulnerable cities housed 1.6 billion people, making up 64% of the total population.²⁸⁶

CPD has linked education as a method of addressing the impacts of climate change.²⁸⁷ Urban areas are hubs of innovation, and increased access to education in urban areas can lead to solutions to global

²⁷³ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2022*. 2022. p. 84.

²⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 43.

²⁷⁵ Ibid. pp. 18, 39, 83.

²⁷⁶ Gu. United Nations, Department of Economics and Social Affairs. *Exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters for world's cities*. 2019. p. 1.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 1.

²⁷⁸ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2022*. 2022. p. 43.

²⁷⁹ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 16.

²⁸⁰ Apap. European Parliament. *The concept of 'climate refugee': Towards a possible definition*. 2023. p. 2.

²⁸¹ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2022*. 2022. p. 224.

²⁸² United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 15.

²⁸³ Blaine et al. United States Institute of Peace. *Climate Change, Migration and the Risk of Conflict in Growing Urban Centers*. 2022.

²⁸⁴ Peri-Cene. *Peri-cene: summary for policy-makers*. 2022. p. 3.

²⁸⁵ Gu. United Nations, Department of Social and Economic Affairs. *Exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters for world's cities*. 2019. p. 5.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Report on the fifty-sixth session (E/CN.9/2023/6)*. 2023. p. 3.



issues such as climate change.²⁸⁸ The ICPD PoA calls for the management of urban areas to improve the quality of life and safeguard the environment.²⁸⁹ The impacts of climate change, including climate migration, are aspects of urban population growth that would benefit from further reviews by CPD.²⁹⁰

Conclusion

As the world becomes increasingly urban, so does the need for sustainable urban growth.²⁹¹ Sustainable urbanization is a vital part of realizing the SDGs.²⁹² Many global frameworks, such as the ICPD PoA or the NUA, provide the blueprint for an urban future that is sustainable for all.²⁹³ However, urban areas face the negative impacts of climate change while being a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and consuming large energy sources.²⁹⁴ More data is needed to help urban areas project the needs of the population, such as transportation and energy demand, as urban areas continue to grow and urban trends shift into the future.²⁹⁵

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can CPD promote sustainable urbanization? What studies can CPD use to address population growth in urban and peri-urban areas? How can Member States address issues regarding sustainable urban population growth while implementing the ICPD PoA? How can the process of sustainable urbanization be equitable for all? What role can peri-urban areas play in sustainable urbanization? What thematic issues can CPD request DESA to address in the context of population growth in peri-urban areas?

²⁸⁸ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2022*. 2022. p. 84; United Nations Commission on Population and Development. *Report on the fifty-sixth session (E/CN.9/2023/6)*. 2023. p. 3.

²⁸⁹ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its contributions to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/2024/3)*. 2024. p. 15.

²⁹⁰ Apap. European Parliament. *The concept of 'climate refugee': Towards a possible definition*. 2023. p. 2.

²⁹¹ United Nations, Commission on Population and Development. *Opening Remarks: Fifty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development*. 2018. p. 2.

²⁹² United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 9.

²⁹³ United Nations, General Assembly. *New Urban Agenda (A/RES/71/256)*. 2016. pp. 11-22.

²⁹⁴ United Nations Human Settlements Programme. *World Cities Report 2022*. 2022. p. 140.

²⁹⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Sustainable cities – gateways for people on the move*. N.d; Andresen et al. *Environmental Research Letters* 18. *Understanding the social impacts of power outages in North America: a systematic review*. 2023. p. 8; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision (ST/ESA/SER.A/420)*. 2018. p. 12.



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