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The world's population is growing larger and older, while also becoming more mobile and more urbanized. Population size, structure and distribution have major implications for, and will be significantly influenced by, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The following key findings are based on a report of the Secretary-General which reviews the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), adopted in Cairo in 1994.

Key findings

1. Important gains have been made in implementing the Programme of Action

The world has witnessed significant progress in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action, adopted 25 years ago. Examples include greater access to sexual and reproductive health care, reduced child and maternal mortality, increased life expectancy, reduced incidence of poverty, improved access to education and advances in gender equality and the empowerment of women.

2. Nevertheless, progress has been uneven, and some major gaps remain

While the global life expectancy at birth rose from 65 years in 1994 to 72 years in 2019, only half of all countries have achieved the targets included in the Programme of Action. Child mortality levels in sub-Saharan Africa, which fell from 180 to 78 deaths per 1,000 births, remain well above the ICPD target. Likewise, the global maternal mortality ratio, despite significant gains, is still above the target established in 1994.

3. World's population is expected to continue to grow, albeit at a declining rate

The annual rate of population growth fell from 1.4 per cent in 1994 to 1.1 per cent today. This growth is projected to slow further in the coming decades. Meeting the demand for resources from a growing and more prosperous population, while protecting the environment and combating climate change, remains a central challenge for achieving sustainable development.

4. Global fertility is projected to reach a level around 2.1 births per woman by the 2060s

Between 1994 and 2019, the total fertility rate fell from 2.9 to 2.5 births per woman. Today, over half of the world's population lives in countries with fertility under 2.1 births per woman,

continues

the level required for populations with low mortality to achieve a growth rate of zero in the long run. Fertility remains above this level in sub-Saharan Africa (4.8), Central and Southern Asia (2.4), Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand (3.4), and Western Asia and Northern Africa (2.9).

5. Mortality rates have fallen globally, but remain high in some regions

Between 1994 and 2019, the under-5 mortality rate fell from 89 deaths under age 5 per 1,000 live births to 41. Yet, a child born in sub-Saharan Africa today is more than 15 times as likely to die before age 5 compared with a child born in the more developed regions. Adult mortality, measured by the probability of dying between the ages of 15 and 60, declined globally from 190 per 1,000 in 1994 to 137 per 1,000 in 2019, yet it remains much higher in sub-Saharan Africa at 273 per 1,000 in 2019.

6. Gaps in life expectancy at birth across regions have narrowed

Since 1994, life expectancy at birth has increased by 5.2 years in Europe and Northern America and by 12 years in sub-Saharan Africa. Accordingly, the gap in life expectancy at birth between countries in the more developed regions versus least developed countries has narrowed from 22 years in 1994 to 15 years in 2019.

7. Use of modern methods of family planning has risen markedly

Globally, among married or in-union women of reproductive age who express a need for family planning, the proportion for whom such need is satisfied with modern methods of contraception increased from 72 per cent in 1994 to 78 per cent in 2019. Nonetheless, in 44 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania, less than half of women's demand for family planning is being met by use of modern methods.

8. Global population is ageing, with important regional differences in timing and speed

Decreasing fertility and rising life expectancy cause populations to grow older. By 2050, the proportion of persons aged 65 years or over is projected to reach 28 per cent in Europe and 23 per cent in Northern America. In Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia, the share of population over age 65 will more than double, to 20 and 18 per cent respectively. In Africa, the region with the youngest age structure, the share of older persons is projected to increase from 4 per cent in 2019 to 9 per cent by 2050.

9. Future population growth will be concentrated in urban areas of Africa and Asia

Today, 56 percent of the world's population resides in urban areas, a share that is projected to increase to 68 per cent in 2050. About 90 per cent of urban growth will take place in Africa and Asia. By 2050, the number of urban dwellers is projected to more than double in sub-Saharan Africa (174%) and to increase by more than half in Central and Southern Asia (80%) and in Western Asia and Northern Africa (66%).

10. Number of international migrants continues to increase

Between 2000 and 2017, the estimated number of persons living outside their country of birth increased by almost 50 per cent, reaching 258 million in 2017. In some areas of the world, international migration has become a major component of population growth.



Prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs as a contribution to the 52nd session of the Commission on Population and Development, to be held from 1 to 5 April 2019. The key findings are based on the report of the Secretary-General "Review and appraisal 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" ([E/CN.9/2019/2](#)). More work of the Population Division is available at www.unpopulation.org.