MR. JOHN WILMOTH, DIRECTOR, POPULATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Opening Statement at the 48th session of the
Commission on Population and Development
New York, 13 April 2015

Madame Chairperson,

Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs,

UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address the Commission on Population and Development at the opening of its forty-eighth

At the individual level, the population dimension focuses on life   vital events, including birth, death, marriage (or other union formation), and migration. These are events that, literally, define a lifetime or that shape the circumstances of life in fundamental ways.

At the aggregate level, the population dimension draws our attention to the demographic mega-trends, such as population growth, population ageing, urbanization, and migration.

Some have lamented that population dynamics are being left out of the SDGs. However, since population dynamics refer to changes in the aggregate characteristics of a population, it makes sense to exclude them from the goal-target framework. It would be contrary to the guidance of Cairo if the SDGs would advance universal targets for quantities such as population size, the fertility level, population distribution by age, or the size of migratory flows. Individual countries can and do set targets in some of these areas   for migration in particular   but that is different than

Rather, the lesson of Cairo is that our collective concerns about current or future population trends should never become a justification for violating the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals.

Population trends matter for all three pillars of sustainable development. This is the added value brought by the Commission on Population and Development, and it is why the Commission will matter even more as we look forward to the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.