COMMISSION ON POPULATI

Between 1950 and today, fertility dropped from almost 5 children per woman to 2.5 children per woman. Fertility declined more markedly among the group of developing countries which, in this case, exclude the least developed countries. Developing countries, which comprise the majority of the world's population, achieved an impressive reduction of fertility: from 6 to 2.5 children per woman. In contrast, the least developed countries saw their fertility drop very slowly, to just 4.4 children today. Consequently, the difference in fertility levels between the least developed countries and the other developing countries increased.

One of the driving forces of fertility decline was the reduction of mortality. Between 1950 and 2010, the world experienced a momentous increase in life expectancy, from just 47 years in 1950 to 68 years in 2010. Thus, the world average today is comparable with the level of mortality that developed countries had in the early 1950s. The least developed countries are lagging behind in their effort to reduce mortality. Nevertheless, as a group, their life expectancy rose from 36 years in 1950 to 56 years in 2010. Life expectancy also rose in developed countries, although it started at a high of 66 years in 1950. By 2010, it stood at 77 years. As a result of these changes, the gap between developed and developing countries narrowed, but that between the least developed countries and the other developing countries widened, partly because of the disproportionate impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the least developed countries.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the objectives of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development is the stabilization of world population, a stabilization that would contribute to attain sustainable development and maintain economic growth. What are the prospects for achieving a stable, that means, unchanging population? The report of the Secretary-General examines a number of scenarios of future population dynamics to illustrate the options.

First, the report asks: what would happen over the long run if today's levels of fertility and mortality remained unchanged at the country level? Such a scenario produces a world population of 3.5 trillion people in 2300, a figure

level, additional reductions are necessary to avoid large population increases over the long run. The population of India, for instance, reaches 2.3 billion in 2100 in the high scenario, a population 0.9 billion higher than that projected by the medium scenario (1.4 billion). By 2300, the difference between the two is even higher (3.1 billion), with the high scenario producing a total population for India alone of 4.4 billion.

Mr. Chairman**,**

As Niels Bohr remarked: “Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future.” Acknowledging the impossibility of predicting the future, the report of the Secretary General on World Demographic Trends uses a variety of scenarios to illustrate the implications of future variations in fertility. Together, the scenarios reveal that current levels of fertility and mortality in countries with above replacement fertility are not sustainable. Fertility levels have to be brought down at least