



United Nations

Commission on Population and Development

**Report on the fifty-third session
(5 April 2019 and 2020)**

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* The Commission was unable to meet formally in 2020 during its fifty-third session, owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and conducted its work through correspondence and virtual, informal meetings.

Note

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

Summary

The fifty-third session of the Commission on Population and Development was opened at United Nations Headquarters on 5 April 2019 for the purpose of electing the Bureau. During the main part of the fifty-third session, scheduled to be held from 30 March to 3 April 2020, the Commission was to address the special theme of “Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development”. Owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the subsequent inability to hold in-person meetings at the United Nations starting in mid-March, the formal session of the Commission could not be held. As a result, events for the Commission’s programme planned by the Bureau, including two multi-stakeholder panels on the special theme and expert panels on reports of the Secretary-General, could not be held. Instead, the Commission conducted the work of its fifty-third session through correspondence and virtual, informal consultations and considered proposals through a silence procedure pursuant to Economic and Social Council decisions 2020/205, 2020/206 and 2020/219.

Five reports of the Secretary-General were prepared for the Commission’s fifty-third session. In accordance with the rules for issuance of reports six weeks before the commencement of the main part of the session, the reports were submitted for editing and translation in mid-January 2020, before the global spread of COVID-19. Therefore, they did not include any material on the impact of the virus. To address this gap, the Secretariat created a dedicated website providing access to relevant information about population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.^a

The report of the Secretary-General on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development ([E/CN.9/2020/2](#)), prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, contains a review of global trends in food security and nutrition. In the report, it is stressed that, while enough food is produced globally to feed the current population, the world is not on track to eliminate hunger by 2030 owing to inequities in distribution and access. After more than a decade of progress, the number of undernourished persons worldwide has increased in recent years. The world is also not on track to meet nutrition-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, despite some progress in reducing childhood stunting and promoting exclusive breastfeeding: some forms of malnutrition continue to worsen, including micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity. Moreover, the current global food system is environmentally unsustainable, with major impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity and climate. Population growth and rising incomes will be important drivers of increased food consumption in many countries. The global food system is a major contributor to climate change; at the same time, climate change is expected to decrease the future stability of food systems. The recommendations in the report include adopting and strengthening policies, including incentives, regulations and dietary guidelines, to encourage people to adopt healthy diets based on food that can be produced sustainably. As policies to make food systems more sustainable may lead to higher food prices, Governments should supplement incomes among the poor.

In the report of the Secretary-General on programmes and interventions for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in the context of population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development ([E/CN.9/2020/3](#)), prepared by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), requirements for optimal nutrition and the interventions needed to ensure access to healthy diets for all are highlighted. Highly effective investments include nutrition for the maternal-infant dyad, the promotion of breastfeeding, the fortification of foods, taxation and regulatory measures, and school-based feeding.

Integration of nutrition within universal health coverage offers the potential to greatly expand nutrition coverage and boost health outcomes. The rising epidemic of obesity and overweight requires urgent action. Policy interventions are urgently needed to increase the share of total consumption composed of nutritious foods and beverages. In this regard, media campaigns, better nourishment in public institutions, fiscal measures and restrictions on food and beverage marketing all warrant wider consideration. Food production has increased significantly over the past 50 years, but at the cost of land degradation, biodiversity loss and pollution. There is an urgent need to promote sustainable agricultural practices in order to protect the long-term resilience of agriculture for future populations.

The report of the Secretary-General on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development ([E/CN.9/2020/4](#)), prepared by UNFPA, found that, between 2017 and 2018, overall gross disbursements of official development assistance (ODA) fell, which had a particularly negative effect on the world's least developed countries. Against that backdrop, changes in the level and distribution of aid between 2016 and 2017, the most recent years for which data disaggregated by sector were available, are highlighted in the report. From 2016 to 2017, aid from official and private donors for sexual and reproductive health increased from \$10,110 million to \$11,201 million and aid from those donors for population data and policy analysis increased from \$243 million to \$339 million. While Development Assistance Committee countries are the largest donors in the area of sexual and reproductive health, multilateral agencies are the largest donors with regard to population data and policy analysis. The role of private donors in population-related programmes is increasing. With regard to ODA allocated for food security and nutrition, the largest share is spent on policy and governance, with relatively little ODA allocated to support agricultural production. Overall, aid from advanced economies to the agricultural sector in developing countries remains low, in particular when compared to the support provided by advanced economies to agriculture in their own countries.

The report of the Secretary-General on world demographic trends ([E/CN.9/2020/5](#)) provides an overview of demographic trends for the world, its regions and selected countries. Projections of future trends suggest that the world's population, currently numbering 7.7 billion, is likely to continue growing in future decades, but at a progressively slower pace. Globally, growth could stabilize at a level of roughly 10.9 billion people by the end of the century. The global population will continue its gradual shift towards a greater proportion of older persons (population ageing) and living in cities (urbanization), while maintaining or further increasing current levels of cross-border mobility (international migration). In countries with large and growing youth populations, creating employment and ensuring sustained and inclusive economic growth will remain top priorities. Investments in education and health care, including for reproductive health and family planning, help to both raise levels of human development and promote a lower birth rate, two preconditions for realizing a "demographic dividend" in high-fertility countries. The continuing growth of both the human population and per capita consumption underlines the importance of ensuring sustainable patterns of consumption and production, while also meeting the basic and immediate needs of a growing population, including access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food for all. More broadly, a fuller integration of population dynamics into development planning and review processes will assist countries in achieving the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The report of the Secretary-General on programme implementation and progress of work in the field of population in 2019 (E/CN.9/2020/6), prepared by the Population Division, contains a review of the progress made by the Division in implementing its programme of work. The report covers the activities of the Division with regard to the analysis of global trends in fertility, mortality, migration, urbanization and population ageing; the preparation of global population estimates and projections; the monitoring of population policies; the analysis of interrelations between population and sustainable development; the dissemination of population data and information; technical cooperation with and capacity development provided to Member States; and the support given to intergovernmental processes through the preparation of reports of the Secretary-General and other parliamentary documents, the organization of expert group meetings and the monitoring of internationally agreed development goals.

On 6 March 2020, the Chair of the fifty-third session of the Commission on Population and Development circulated a zero draft of a resolution on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and following an informal meeting with Member States, on 15 May, the Chair substituted the original zero draft with a short and concise draft declaration on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development in the context of the pandemic.

Several rounds of informal consultations on the draft declaration were held virtually in May and June. Discussions on the draft declaration pointed to a number of challenges for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. First, the pandemic was undermining and even reversing progress made towards ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition by 2030. Second, delegations expressed concern that a reallocation of health resources as a result of the pandemic would have a negative impact on satisfying the unmet need for family planning, eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls and ending harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage. Third, delegations voiced concern that measures to curtail the spread of the virus could have major negative consequences for global trade and supply chains and for the movement of food and food-related items.

In responding to the pandemic, Member States stressed the need for strengthening social protection mechanisms, enhancing humanitarian assistance, improving national health systems and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable. Access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food and the enjoyment of a diversified, balanced and healthy diet would help to reduce the risk of malnutrition in all its forms, including overweight and obesity. The world food systems summit and the Nutrition for Growth Summit, both planned for 2021, were considered important opportunities for putting in place inclusive, sustainable and resilient food systems and for moving towards diversified, balanced and healthy diets for all.

Delegations supported the reaffirmation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its relevance in the context of the draft declaration. However, views differed on how to refer to the outcome documents of the regional review conferences of the Programme of Action. Moreover, no agreement was reached on references to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Further, perspectives differed on whether to refer to the impact of unilateral coercive measures in the context of the draft declaration. Following objections from several delegations, the Chair withdrew the text of the draft declaration on 6 July 2020. On 10 July, following the objection of one delegation, the Chair withdrew his proposal to prepare a summary of the discussions on the special theme in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic for inclusion in the report of the Commission.

The Chair also convened informal consultations on other draft proposals. The Commission decided that a full consideration of the special theme for the fifty-third session would be postponed to the fifty-fourth session, in 2021. The special theme previously agreed for the fifty-fourth session, “Population and sustainable development, in particular sustained and inclusive economic growth”, would be considered at the fifty-fifth session, in 2022. The Commission also approved revising the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session, in 2021, to include a new agenda item on the future role and organization of the Commission.

Under the auspices of the Bureau, the Secretariat prepared an informal note on the future role and organization of the Commission on Population and Development with a view to initiating informal reflection among its members. It is expected that the note, which was circulated to Member States on 10 July, may serve as a basis for the consideration of this issue at the Commission’s fifty-fourth session, in 2021.

^a www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/selected-documentation-related-food-security-nutrition-and-covid-19.

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Chapter I

Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

A. Draft decision for adoption by the Council

1. The Commission recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft decision:

Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its fifty-third session and provisional agenda for its fifty-fourth session

The Economic and Social Council:

(a) Takes note of the report of the Commission on Population and Development on its fifty-third session;¹

(b) Approves the provisional agenda for the fifty-fourth session of the Commission as set out below:

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.²
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

Documentation

Provisional agenda for the fifty-fourth session of the Commission

Note by the Secretariat on the organization of work of the session

3. General debate:
 - (a) Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels;
 - (b) Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development

Report of the Secretary-General on programmes and interventions for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in the context of population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development

¹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2020, Supplement No. 5 (E/2020/25).*

² In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2005/213, the Commission, immediately following the closure of its fifty-third session, will hold the 1st meeting of its fifty-fourth session for the sole purpose of electing the new Chair and other officers of the Commission, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council.

Report of the Secretary-General on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

4. Programme implementation and future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population.

Documentation³

Report of the Secretary-General on programme implementation and progress of work in the field of population in 2020: Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Note by the Secretariat on the proposed programme plan for 2021 and programme performance for 2019: subprogramme 5, Population, of programme 7, Economic and social affairs

5. Future role and organization of the Commission on Population and Development

Documentation

No advance documentation requested

6. Provisional agenda for the fifty-fifth session of the Commission.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat containing the provisional agenda for the fifty-fifth session of the Commission

7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fifty-fourth session.

B. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

2. The following decision was adopted by the Commission and is brought to the attention of the Council:

Decision 2020/101

Special themes for the fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth sessions of the Commission on Population and Development

The Commission on Population and Development, recalling its decisions 2018/101 and 2019/101 and in the light of the extraordinary circumstances occasioned by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, decides that the special themes for its fifty-fourth session, in 2021, and its fifty-fifth session, in 2022, shall be, respectively, “Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development” and “Population and sustainable development, in particular sustained and inclusive economic growth”.

³ The programme plan/strategic framework and proposed programme of work are subject to the new annual programme budget beginning in 2020, approved by the General Assembly in its resolution [72/266](#), including a new results framework. The 2021 annual programme budget was scheduled to be finalized in the first half of 2020.

Chapter II

General debate:

(a) Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels

(b) Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development

3. In accordance with the invitation of the Chair of the Commission at its fifty-third session to Member States and observer States to submit general statements on the overall work of the Commission in writing, communicated in his letter dated 10 July 2020, general statements received by the Secretariat for posting on the Commission's website can be accessed at the following link: www.un.org/development/desa/pd/events/CPD53.

Action taken by the Commission

Special themes for the fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth sessions of the Commission on Population and Development

4. On 6 July 2020, the Chair of the Commission circulated a letter in which he transmitted for consideration under the silence procedure, in accordance with Economic and Social Council decisions 2020/205, 2020/206 and 2020/219, a draft decision entitled "Special themes for the fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth sessions of the Commission on Population and Development" (E/CN.9/2020/L.4). The draft decision was submitted by the Chair on the basis of informal consultations.

5. On 9 July 2020, the Commission considered the draft decision adopted, in accordance with the process set out in Economic and Social Council decisions 2020/205, 2020/206 and 2020/219 (see chap. I, sect. B, decision 2020/101).

Chapter III

Provisional agenda for the fifty-fourth session of the Commission

6. In his letter dated 6 July 2020, the Chair of the Commission transmitted for consideration under the silence procedure, in accordance with Economic and Social Council decisions 2020/205, 2020/206 and 2020/219, a draft decision entitled “Provisional agenda for the fifty-fourth session of the Commission” ([E/CN.9/2020/L.2/Rev.1](#)). The draft decision was submitted by the Chair on the basis of informal consultations.

7. On 9 July 2020, the Commission considered the draft decision adopted, in accordance with the process set out in Economic and Social Council decisions 2020/205, 2020/206 and 2020/219 (see chap. I, sect. A).

Chapter IV

Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fifty-third session

8. On 10 July 2020, on the basis of the proposal contained in a letter from the Chair, in which he revised the draft report of the Commission on its fifty-third session ([E/CN.9/2020/L.5](#)), the Commission considered its draft report adopted in accordance with the process set out in Economic and Social Council decisions 2020/205, 2020/206 and 2020/219 and authorized the Vice-Chair and Rapporteur, Nakano Junya (Japan), to finalize the document in consultation with the Secretariat.

Chapter V

Organization of the session

A. Work of the session

9. On 5 April 2019, in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2005/213, the Commission, immediately following the closure of its fifty-second session, held the 1st meeting of its fifty-third session for the sole purpose of electing the new officers of the Commission.

10. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/4 and taking into account the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the working arrangements and the available technological and procedural solutions in the interim period, the Commission did not hold additional formal meetings of its fifty-third session.

11. The Commission conducted the remaining business of its fifty-third session through correspondence and virtual, informal consultations and considered proposals through a silence procedure pursuant to Economic and Social Council decisions 2020/205, 2020/206 and 2020/219.⁴

B. Election of officers

12. At its 1st meeting, on 5 April 2019, and on 9 July 2020, in accordance with the process set out in Economic and Social Council decisions 2020/205, 2020/206 and 2020/219 (E/CN.9/2020/L.3), the Commission elected the following officers:

Chair:

Christian Braun (Luxembourg)

Vice-Chairs:

Yuliana Angelova (Bulgaria)
Mariame Fofana (Burkina Faso)
Roshelle Henry (Jamaica)
Nakano Junya (Japan)

13. On 9 July 2020, the Commission designated the Vice-Chair, Nakano Junya (Japan), to serve also as Rapporteur for the session.

C. Agenda

14. The agenda of the fifty-third session of the Commission, as contained in document E/CN.9/2020/1, read as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. General debate:
 - (a) Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels;

⁴ See annex for a list of the correspondence from the Chair of the Commission addressed to Member States relating to the work of the Commission at its fifty-third session.

- (b) Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development.
- 4. Programme implementation and future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population.
- 5. Provisional agenda for the fifty-fourth session of the Commission.
- 6. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fifty-third session.

D. Documentation

- 15. The list of documents before the Commission at its fifty-third session is available on the website of the Population Division (www.un.org/development/desa/pd/events/CPD53).

Annex

Correspondence from the Chair of the Commission addressed to Member States relating to the work of the Commission at its fifty-third session

12 February 2020	Letter transmitting arrangements for the fifty-third session of the Commission
1 March 2020	Letter postponing the briefing on the fifty-third session of the Commission
5 March 2020	Letter of invitation for a briefing for Member States on the fifty-third session of the Commission, to be held on 6 March 2020
6 March 2020	Letter to follow up on the briefing for Member States and to transmit the zero draft of the resolution on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development and a draft proposal on the special theme of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission, to be held in 2022
1 May 2020	Letter of invitation for an informal, virtual meeting to exchange views on the outcome of the fifty-third session, to be held on 7 May 2020
15 May 2020	Letter transmitting the zero draft of the declaration on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development in the context of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and a draft proposal on the special theme of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission, to be held in 2021, and the special theme of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission, to be held in 2022
22 May 2020	Letter of invitation to the first informal consultation on the draft declaration and other draft proposals of the fifty-third session of the Commission on Population and Development, to be held on 29 May 2020, and transmitting a revised provisional agenda for the fifty-fourth session
2 June 2020	Letter of invitation to further informal consultations on draft proposals, to be held on 5 and 8 June 2020, and transmitting the first revision of the draft declaration on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic
16 June 2020	Letter of invitation to further informal consultations, to be held on 22 June 2020, and transmitting the second revision of the draft declaration on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic
24 June 2020	Letter of invitation to further informal consultations, to be held on 25 June 2020
6 July 2020	Letter informing of the withdrawal of the draft declaration on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and proposing a way forward

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| 6 July 2020 | Letter placing proposals for consideration by the Commission on Population and Development at its fifty-third session under a silence procedure until 6.30 p.m. on 9 July 2020, in accordance with Economic and Social Council decisions 2020/205, 2020/206 and 2020/219 |
| 9 July 2020 | Letter announcing the outcome of the silence procedure |
| 10 July 2020 | Letter on the follow-up to the outcome of the silence procedure |
| 10 July 2020 | Letter transmitting the note on the future role and organization of the Commission on Population and Development, prepared by the Secretariat |
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