



Chief Executives Board for Coordination

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Report of the High-level Committee on Programmes at its fiftieth session

(Vienna, 2 and 3 October 2025)

I. Introduction

1. The High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) held its fiftieth session on 2 and 3 October 2025 at the Vienna International Centre, hosted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The agenda of the session and the list of participants are contained in annexes I and II, respectively, to the present report.

2. As the Chair of the Committee, the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Inger Andersen, was unable to attend, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Diene Keita, served as Acting Chair. In opening the session, the Acting Chair welcomed members and expressed deep gratitude to IAEA for generously hosting the meeting.

3. The Director General of IAEA, Rafael Mariano Grossi, noted that the Committee had convened at a unique moment for multilateralism and the United Nations system. He stressed that it was necessary to recognize the seriousness of the challenges and adapt accordingly. He underscored the opportunity to shape change from within United Nations system organizations and expressed his appreciation for the role that HLCP was playing to generate concrete inter-agency actions to address global trends. In particular, HLCP offered a platform to help acknowledge overlaps and convergences at the programmatic level and identify synergies across mandates. He reiterated the Committee's potential to help the United Nations system confront the changing global context now and in the future.

4. Adding her remarks, the Acting Chair observed that the fiftieth session marked 25 years since the Committee had been formed as the policy and programme coordination arm of the reformed CEB. Reflecting on the Committee's early contributions, she contrasted the aspirations and hope of the early 2000s with the current geopolitical climate, marked by: an erosion of United Nations principles; pushback against multilateralism and the rules-based international order; climate and science scepticism; and disregard for human rights, especially women's rights. Nonetheless, multilateral action endured, evidenced by the adoption of the Sevilla Commitment at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the agreement of the outcome document of the Second World Summit for Social Development and other recent examples. The Acting Chair underscored that, amid



times of change and transition, there remained hope and that the United Nations had a duty to stick to its principles and adapt to the changing realities in service of those most in need.

5. The Acting Chair outlined the agenda for the session, which consisted of a reflection on United Nations system coordination in times of transition, approval of the draft United Nations system common messages on policy responses to demographic change, a dialogue with members of the high-level expert group on beyond GDP, approval of the draft United Nations system common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime and consideration of the final report of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence.

II. High-level Committee on Programmes at 50 (HLCP@50): reflection on United Nations system coordination in times of transition

6. Setting the scene for the reflection, the Acting Chair recalled that, at the forty-ninth session of the Committee, members had recognized that HLCP was well suited to address the profound paradigm shifts affecting international cooperation and to bring together a broad cross section of the United Nations system to tackle shared problems. The fiftieth session provided an opportunity to reflect on the Committee's successes and lessons learned over the years to inform how HLCP could fully utilize its role to deliver tangible outcomes for the United Nations system in a rapidly changing context. While the discussion was intended to focus on change more broadly, it could also enrich thinking on the Secretary-General's UN80 initiative. Aiming to elicit actionable suggestions, the Acting Chair invited members to consider how the Committee could most effectively help the United Nations system to work through challenges affecting policy and programme implementation and what HLCP could do to ensure that it meets the needs and priorities of its members now and in years to come.

7. Adding to the Acting Chair's remarks, the Secretary of the Committee looked back on the Committee's evolution over the past 25 years and the wide-ranging outputs that it had produced to meet members' changing needs. She highlighted fundamental and enduring characteristics of the Committee, including: its adherence to its policy coherence and programme coordination mandate; its inclusive cross-pillar composition; and its flexible, impact-oriented working methods. In the face of the challenges confronting the United Nations system, she expressed confidence that HLCP could play a helpful role by continuing to provide a space for horizon-scanning, problem-solving and innovation.

8. A wide-ranging and candid discussion on United Nations system coordination in times of transition followed. Throughout, members conveyed a deep sense of commitment to the United Nations and its values. Many spoke of the urgency of the moment, the erosion of trust in multilateralism and the need to reaffirm the relevance and impact of the United Nations. In such a context, members saw great value in and need for HLCP, for example as a collegial space to solve shared problems in the interest of the wider United Nations system and to find common ground and align across mandates on strategic issues of mutual concern. Its accomplishments could be attributed, *inter alia*, to its diverse membership and the breadth and depth of knowledge, experience and expertise of its members. Members committed to strengthening the Committee's role in guiding the United Nations system through a period of profound change and to seizing opportunities for rising stronger together. HLCP must be a space not only for strategic thinking but also for coordinated action,

where organizations could come together to support one another, uphold the Charter of the United Nations and respond coherently to the needs of people and planet.

9. Suggestions offered by members coalesced around five key areas for action, for further consideration and development.

Provide strategic thought leadership

10. Members reaffirmed the Committee's dual role as a strategic think tank and a platform for future-oriented joint action, emphasizing the need to balance policy coherence and coordination with operational relevance. It was well positioned to provide strategic thought leadership to help the United Nations system navigate current headwinds, anticipate emerging challenges and inform system-wide responses, including through scanning the horizon for emerging risks, fostering strategic foresight and sharing situational intelligence across organizations. Suggestions were made to introduce regular, structured updates on geopolitical trends, shifting alliances and governing body dynamics to orient the discussions within the current global context; and to create space to share ongoing entity-led work to raise awareness and understanding of institutional perspectives and relevant sectoral developments of interest to the broader United Nations system. Features that supported increased interactivity during meetings, such as engagement with experts and breakout group work, could facilitate informal dialogue and collective thinking.

Uphold and defend United Nations norms, principles and values

11. Members recognized HLCP as a forum for candid dialogue on sensitive and complex issues confronting the United Nations system. It was a moral imperative and strategic necessity for all United Nations organizations to maintain a strong normative foundation and confidently speak up for the Charter and its core values. HLCP members had an important role in taking that narrative forward. In that vein, the Committee could explore holding deeper conversations on topics such as the erosion of fundamental values and norms, threats to democracy, responsible sovereignty and complex and protracted issues.

Support programmatic prioritization and collaboration to enhance impact under financial constraints

12. In the light of decreasing funding and increasing demands, HLCP had a role to support programmatic prioritization, alignment and synergy with a view to protecting and reinvigorating core mandates while reducing duplication and increasing the efficient use of resources. In that context, the need to ensure that the Committee's policy discussions translated into tangible action and measurable impact was stressed. HLCP should be an engine for action, facilitating joint problem-solving, supporting cross-sectoral responses and promoting collaboration to strengthen coherence, find shared solutions and achieve collective results. The Committee could also serve as a platform to address the need to move from short-term cost containment to making longer-term strategic programmatic choices. It could scan for anticipated capacity and programmatic gaps, strategize on how to work together to cover those gaps and contribute to strengthening coherence among different funding mechanisms.

Support the development and implementation of reform proposals

13. Underscoring the Committee's broad membership, members expressed their interest in informing the development of reform proposals and bringing the full weight of the United Nations system behind implementation. The Committee was seen as well placed to contribute to elaborating salient proposals contained in the UN80 action plan. In particular, it could make a meaningful contribution to the review

of global coordination bodies referenced in paragraph 61 of the Secretary-General's "Shifting Paradigms" report (A/80/392). Other opportunities mentioned included adding to efforts: to better link data, statistics and insights across the United Nations system; to promote stronger regional integration; to address funding gaps and strengthen coherence across funding mechanisms; and to help organizations in planning for the sunseting of programmes.

Enhance communication

14. Communication emerged as a recurring theme, with members expressing concern over the erosion of public perception of the relevance and effectiveness of the United Nations. There was broad support for a more strategic and coordinated communication strategy that was people-centred and empathetic to peoples' real-life experiences. The importance of clear, jargon-free messaging that resonated with diverse audiences – both internal and external – was emphasized. HLCP could complement ongoing efforts with the aim of contributing to better coordinated and more strategic communications more distinctly conveying the purpose and impact of the United Nations. Projecting the value proposition of the United Nations more effectively could help raise awareness and improve perception of the utility, value and effectiveness of the United Nations, and, in turn, garner more public and financial support. HLCP could also help showcase how – acting together – the United Nations system was stronger than its individual entities. In a related vein, there were calls to consider strategically leveraging alliances, philanthropic organizations, the private sector and other partners to bolster communications and engage with United Nations programmes in a way that fostered collective thinking, strengthened alignment across actors, generated investments and produced more coherent actions.

15. In closing, the Acting Chair reflected on the richness and urgency of the discussion, emphasizing the Committee's unique and valued role in guiding the United Nations system through a time of profound transition. Notably, HLCP was seen as a unifier and trust-builder, a space to enhance understanding across the United Nations system and solve programmatic problems together and a platform for shared leadership. As such, it could serve as a mechanism to help advance reform. She reiterated the calls to balance think tank and "action engine" functions and the need to move with agility, urgency and pragmatism, and to ensure that policy was effectively translated into action. She further noted that many members were interested in exploring how HLCP could contribute to enhancing both internal and external communications to be more strategic and coordinated and to better project the United Nations system's value proposition. The Committee supported developing the suggestions under the action areas identified in the discussion, with further consideration to be given to concrete follow-up.

III. Progress beyond gross domestic product

16. The Acting Chair recalled that, during the second regular session of CEB, in 2021, against the background of multiple global crises, the Board had discussed the need to measure development progress beyond gross domestic product (GDP), underscoring that going beyond GDP was not just a macroeconomic or statistical issue, but rather it interconnected all dimensions and key drivers of sustainable development and was deeply consequential for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. Subsequently, at the Board's request, HLCP established a core group to develop a United Nations system-wide contribution on beyond GDP and, in July 2022, approved the paper *Valuing What Counts: United Nations System-wide Contribution on Progress Beyond Gross Domestic Product*, prepared under the leadership of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The paper informed the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 4: valuing what counts – framework to progress beyond gross domestic product". With the adoption of the Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution [79/1](#)) in September 2024, Member States, in action 53, reaffirmed the need to urgently develop measures of progress on sustainable development that complement or go beyond GDP and requested the Secretary-General to establish an independent high-level expert group to develop recommendations for "a limited number of country-owned and universally applicable indicators" and to present the outcomes of its work during the eightieth session of the General Assembly. The Acting Chair welcomed Nora Lustig, Co-Chair of the high-level expert group, and Samuel Z. Stone, Professor Emeritus of Latin American Economics, Tulane University, and Martine Durand, Senior International Expert and Consultant in Official Statistics, to the meeting. The discussion presented a unique opportunity to build on the Committee's legacy and provide the high-level expert group with a broader United Nations system perspective and useful insights on pressing sustainable development challenges, available data, expertise and capacities.

17. In her introductory remarks, Karima El Korri, Director of the Sustainable Development Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, thanked the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD, UNDP and the regional commissions for supporting the work of the high-level expert group, noting that the group's efforts were deeply rooted in the work of HLCP and *Valuing What Counts*. Since then, momentum to turn aspiration into action had grown. In addition to action 53 of the Pact for the Future, the Doha Political Declaration adopted at the Second World Summit for Social Development reaffirmed the commitment to move the beyond GDP agenda forward. Since its establishment in May 2025, the high-level expert group had made considerable progress towards elaborating a conceptual framework for measuring progress beyond GDP. Today's discussion would provide an opportunity for HLCP to learn more about the efforts of the group and provide an input to its work.

18. Providing an overview of the work of the high-level expert group, Ms. Lustig noted that the group had chosen a framework for assessing social and economic progress across three dimensions: well-being, measured through indicators like income, health, leisure and social relations; inclusiveness and equity, which covered vertical inequalities, such as income distribution, and horizontal inequalities such as gender and ethnicity; and sustainability, defined broadly to include environmental, economic and social elements and sought to reconcile short-term and long-term considerations. The approach emphasized moving beyond GDP through the incorporation of factors which were overlooked by GDP, such as leisure and inequality in hours of paid and unpaid work. Next steps involved creating a dashboard of no more than 20 indicators that captured those dimensions, reflected inequalities and considered cumulative deprivations, all while balancing universality with flexibility to account for countries at different stages of development. Questions remained regarding aggregation methods, weighting and ranking systems and how to complement macro indicators with multidimensional ones and achieve greater transparency to help justify trade-offs among domains.

19. Ms. Durand complemented Ms. Lustig's presentation with an account of impediments to the adoption of measures that go beyond GDP. She emphasized the need to move beyond analysis and address the reasons why the well-being agenda, despite long-standing efforts since the *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*, prepared by Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi (Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission report (2009)) and the Human Development Index initiative (since 1990), had limited uptake.

While new indicators were aimed at transforming policymaking by focusing on what mattered to people, improving diagnosis and helping to justify trade-offs across domains, major obstacles remained to overcome resistance among policymakers. There was a need for tools and strategies to build a compelling narrative and move away from entrenched reliance on GDP, institutional silos and long-held beliefs in trickle-down economics. Ms. Durand stressed that success required not only the identification of robust indicators but also the use of practical tools, long-term finance and better communication to show how these measures improved lives. Ultimately, the challenge was in escaping old paradigms and ensuring that new indicators would lead to real policy change.

20. During the discussion, there was strong consensus that GDP alone was insufficient to capture the full picture of human well-being and inclusive, sustainable development. Members emphasized the need for complementary metrics that reflected environmental health, social equity, digital inclusion and long-term prosperity to inform the design of balanced policy interventions. There was broad agreement that any new indicators should be simple, standardized and easy for policymakers to adopt, while also being nuanced enough to reflect diverse national contexts. There was also shared recognition that vulnerable populations, including rural communities, migrants and women, were often invisible in GDP statistics, and that new metrics should better reflect the realities and contributions of these groups.

21. In addition, members shared details of individual initiatives in developing indices that measured progress beyond traditional economic indicators. These included, inter alia, multidimensional indices that captured sectoral strengths and vulnerabilities in tourism, rural development, food security, health systems and climate resilience. In the implementation of additional indicators for measuring progress beyond GDP, members noted the need to take into account national statistical capacities, including in fragile and conflict situations, and suggested that current United Nations system custodians of Sustainable Development Goals indicators be involved early on to ensure continuity and facilitate capacity-building support. The importance of transparency related to concessional funding and stress-testing dashboards before public release to ensure robustness and reliability were also highlighted.

22. Ms. Lustig and Ms. Durant expressed their gratitude for the rich exchange, emphasizing the importance of cross-sector collaboration to develop transformational indicators that go beyond GDP. They proposed to follow up with several members on their organizations' multidimensional indices and welcomed the suggestion to work closely with custodian entities of Sustainable Development Goal indicators on defining domains for new indices and supporting national capacity needs. The presenters echoed the call for a simple, universal and standardized framework to facilitate the uptake of new metrics and expressed concern over declining resources and donor support, which created challenges for building and expanding national capacities. They expressed support for collective United Nations system efforts to protect funding for data capacity-building, especially in countries lacking robust statistical infrastructure. In closing, the Acting Chair thanked the speakers for their engagement and stimulating presentations and Committee members for the many insightful contributions.

IV. Transnational organized crime

23. The Acting Chair invited members to turn their attention to the item on transnational organized crime, recalling that the Secretary-General and CEB, at its first regular session of 2024, had requested the United Nations Office on Drugs and

Crime (UNODC) to lead a process to propose how the United Nations system could work together more coherently to tackle this complex challenge. In October 2024, the Committee established a 23-member time-bound task team on transnational organized crime to produce a United Nations system common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime. The draft before that Committee, for its consideration and approval, reflected the results of an extensive inter-agency consultation process over the past 12 months and was informed by regional field dialogues and expert inputs. The common approach was aimed at enhancing United Nations system coordination and policy coherence for supporting Member States in their efforts to prevent and address transnational organized crime and included a set of joint actions to take it forward. The Acting Chair invited the Chief of Staff to the UNODC Director-General, Jeremy Douglas, to present the draft common approach on behalf of the task team.

24. Mr. Douglas expressed his gratitude for the contributions to the entities involved in addressing transnational organized crime, a complex and evolving global threat. Transnational organized crime was profit-driven, exploitative, innovative and highly adaptable, with significant regional variations, from tech-driven crime in South-East Asia to growing illicit trade in Latin America. The increased use of artificial intelligence and synthetic drugs posed notable new challenges. In response, the aim of the United Nations system common approach was to improve the understanding of and response to the evolving nature of transnational organized crime, enhance data collection and the sharing of analysis and expertise, promote joint resource mobilization, develop common messaging, integrate programming to strengthen transnational organized crime-related support to Member States and foster a shared narrative that promoted rule of law- and human-rights based solutions. Six joint actions were planned to promote implementation of the common approach, including a feasibility assessment for data-sharing, a regional pilot, an initiative against financial crime, a data collection on the environmental impact of transnational organized crime and joint messaging. Going forward, a dynamic and adaptive approach was proposed to meet the ever-evolving nature of transnational organized crime. An inter-agency coordination mechanism outside of the Committee's remit and under the leadership of UNODC, with rotating co-chairs, would be established to advance implementation of the common approach.

25. During the discussion, members expressed deep appreciation for the work of UNODC and the task team and praised the timeliness and inclusiveness of the process leading to the draft common approach, its rich analytical background and the degree to which it was gender responsive, people-centred and human rights-centred and promoted regional approaches. The common approach was noted as a very good example of addressing a complex issue in a coherent and coordinated manner. The leveraging of United Nations system capacities at the regional and subregional levels was particularly highlighted as a practical starting point for coordinated responses. Members reaffirmed their commitment to contributing to and co-leading joint actions, as relevant, and expressed interest in participating in the coordination mechanism outside of the Committee. Several members highlighted issues of particular interest related to the common approach, such as opportunities to address corruption, consumption, illicit fishing and arms trafficking, the use of technology in support of evidence collection, joint resource mobilization and the potential use of transnational organized crime-related data and foresight capacities in support of broader United Nations efforts. Members further reflected on the urban dimension of transnational organized crime, the risks of securitization and the importance of leveraging United Nations structures to help align international responses and promote interregional approaches.

26. In his concluding remarks, Mr. Douglas expressed his appreciation for the Committee's positive feedback and the collaborative spirit shown throughout the process. He noted that the issues raised demonstrated the value of joint responses at the country and regional levels and required deeper discussion and collaboration, which would be taken forward through the proposed coordination mechanism outside of the Committee's mandate. The Acting Chair concluded by thanking UNODC for its leadership in developing the common approach and members for their useful feedback and readiness to approve the document pending the incorporation of final comments. She confirmed that the Committee took note of the joint actions and proposed coordination mechanism outside of the Committee's purview and encouraged members' continued engagement in this dynamic and important topic.

Conclusion

27. The Committee approved the draft United Nations system common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime for onward transmission to CEB for endorsement and took note of the joint actions for its implementation.

V. Demographic change for sustainable development

28. The Committee continued its consideration of demographic change as a defining megatrend with wide-ranging implications for sustainable development. Building on the foundational discussion held at its forty-ninth session and the approval of the terms of reference of the HLCP task team on demographic change at its intersessional meeting in June 2025, the Acting Chair invited the Committee to consider and approve the draft United Nations system common messages on policy responses to demographic change. The messages had been developed through an inclusive consultation process co-chaired by UNFPA and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with contributions from 18 entities participating in the task team. The Acting Chair noted that the draft messages had also benefited from feedback provided by relevant inter-agency mechanisms whose work related to demographic change.

29. Presenting the item, Ms. Keita, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, Co-Chair of the task team, emphasized the need for a coherent and unified narrative on demographic change. She outlined three core principles underpinning the draft common messages: grounding policy responses in human rights and individual choice; fostering inclusive economies and cohesive societies; and integrating demographic data into national and global planning processes. Ms. Keita stressed that the messages reflect common ground across the United Nations system and enabled collective action. She noted that the messages were intended to serve as a foundation for future engagement, including in the context of the Second World Summit for Social Development and the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Population and Development.

30. The Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Bjorg Sandkjaer, Co-Chair of the task team, provided an overview of the five thematic areas covered in the draft messages: upholding human rights and empowering all people to make choices; building inclusive economies and cohesive societies; investing in human capital and healthy ageing across the life course; fostering sustainable, inclusive and resilient communities; and strengthening governance and planning with demographic understanding and foresight. She emphasized the importance of integrating demographic analysis into broader development frameworks. Ms. Sandkjaer also introduced the annexed mapping of inter-agency initiatives, intended as a living document to be expanded in

the next phase of the task team's work. She noted that the messages would inform the proposal for a system-wide approach on demographic change to be developed in the next phase of the task team's work.

31. In the discussion, members expressed broad support for the draft messages, commending their balance, inclusivity and evidence-based framing. The importance of maintaining a gender-responsive lens, in particular in relation to ageing, was emphasized. The role of migration and forced displacement was widely acknowledged, with several members emphasizing the need for realistic, country-specific objectives and integrated support strategies that reflected the diverse demographic pressures faced by Member States. The intersection of demographic change and environmental sustainability, urbanization and housing was noted, including the need to address informal settlements and the role of local and regional governments in managing demographic dynamics. The implications of demographic change in conflict and crisis settings were also discussed, with members noting the impact on population structures, service delivery and peacebuilding. The relevance of robust data systems, including sex- and age-disaggregated data, was underscored, alongside calls for effective communication strategies to engage diverse audiences. Several members stressed the need to ensure that demographic change was addressed holistically, while balancing the needs of various population groups.

32. In response to the discussion, the Co-Chairs welcomed the Committee's feedback and strong support for the common messages. They thanked members of the task team for their contributions to the document, which served to ensure that the United Nations system spoke with one voice when engaging with Member States and other stakeholders on critical issues around demographic change. In conclusion, the Acting Chair confirmed that the Committee was ready to approve the draft common messages subject to the incorporation of minor adjustments. As a next step, the task team would build on the common messages to produce a paper outlining a set of guiding principles and policy recommendations designed to facilitate support to Member States and other stakeholders. In the paper, they would propose a draft system-wide common approach to demographic change, to be submitted for the Committee's review and approval at its fifty-first session.

Conclusion

33. **The Committee approved the draft United Nations system common messages on policy responses to demographic change, contained in annex III to the present report, for onward transmission to CEB for endorsement.**

VI. The use and governance of artificial intelligence and related frontier technologies

34. The Acting Chair recalled that HLCP and CEB had been examining the role of the United Nations system in addressing risks and opportunities associated with artificial intelligence since 2017 and that, in 2020, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence had been established to bring together United Nations system normative and programmatic expertise on artificial intelligence to enhance system-wide policy coherence and programmatic coordination in this area. She highlighted the achievements of the group under the leadership of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), including the development of the Principles for the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in the United Nations system and the United Nations system white paper on artificial intelligence governance. She further recalled that a revised proposal for enhancing United Nations system coordination and policy

coherence in support of artificial intelligence governance, prepared by the Working Group, had been approved by the Committee in March 2025, with a focus on delivering concrete and practical outputs.

35. The Acting Chair noted that, in line with guidance received from the Chair of CEB, the Chair of HLCP had clarified at the Committee's forty-ninth session that the mandate of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence would not be extended beyond the fiftieth session, as HLCP subsidiary bodies were time bound and served as mechanisms for internal United Nations system coordination. She also noted that the General Assembly had recently adopted resolution [79/325](#) on the terms of reference and modalities for the establishment and functioning of the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to facilitate, within existing resources and mandates, appropriate Secretariat support for the Panel and the Dialogue by leveraging United Nations system-wide capacities, including those of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence. She invited the Committee to consider the final report of the Inter-Agency Working Group, prepared by ITU and UNESCO, which summarized activities completed by the group over the past 12 months.

36. Presenting the report, the Deputy Secretary-General of ITU, Tomas Lamanauskas, and the Artificial Intelligence Coordinator and Senior Adviser in the Office of the Director-General of UNESCO, Max Kendrick, outlined the achievements of the working group over the past year, highlighting the upcoming launch of the United Nations AI Resource Hub, a centralized platform offering searchable access to more than 700 artificial intelligence-related initiatives across more than 50 United Nations system entities. The Hub was designed to support coordination, reduce duplication and facilitate partnerships at the global, regional and country levels. The Co-Chairs emphasized the importance of maintaining system-wide coherence and responsiveness to Member States' mandates, including supporting the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance. They proposed that the working group transition into a stand-alone coordination mechanism outside the remit of HLCP, with updated governance arrangements and terms of reference to be developed in consultation with United Nations system entities.

37. In the discussion, members expressed strong appreciation for the work of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence and thanked ITU and UNESCO for their leadership and efforts in enhancing United Nations system coordination and policy coherence in support of artificial intelligence governance. The value of the AI Resource Hub as a practical tool for coordination and knowledge-sharing was widely acknowledged and its further development encouraged. The importance of maintaining inclusive, human rights-based and gender-responsive approaches to artificial intelligence governance was emphasized, alongside calls to prioritize capacity-building for developing countries and to ensure the complementarity of efforts on artificial intelligence across the United Nations system, including with the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies of the United Nations, the United Nations International Computing Centre and the Internet Governance Forum. Members also highlighted the growing relevance of artificial intelligence to their respective mandates, including in areas such as climate data, humanitarian coordination, intellectual property, space governance and environmental sustainability.

38. The Committee supported the conclusion of the mandate of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence under HLCP. However, members widely acknowledged the need for continued United Nations system-wide coordination on

artificial intelligence. The proposal to transition the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence into an independent stand-alone coordination mechanism outside the remit of HLCP found strong support. Significant interest was also expressed in contributing to the next phase of the work and the mechanism's establishment and working modalities.

39. The Co-Chairs welcomed the Committee's feedback and reiterated their commitment to supporting a smooth transition. They confirmed that the stand-alone inter-agency structure would serve as a system-wide coordination mechanism and facilitate engagement on artificial intelligence across the United Nations system, with updated governance arrangements to better support Member States' mandates. The Co-Chairs committed to consulting with members of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence on the terms of reference and working methods and to maintaining linkages with relevant inter-agency mechanisms and supporting pertinent intergovernmental processes. The artificial intelligence Resource Hub remained a central deliverable, with further developments planned to enhance its functionality and accessibility. The Co-Chairs also offered to support capacity-building efforts, including for United Nations staff and HLCP colleagues.

40. In conclusion, the Acting Chair affirmed the Committee's decision to conclude the mandate of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence under HLCP and thanked the co-leads for their leadership and members of the Working Group for their dedication over the years in bringing the United Nations system together on artificial intelligence, wishing them success in their future coordination efforts.

Conclusion

41. **The Committee expressed its appreciation for the work of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence over the years. It took note of the final report of the Inter-Agency Working Group and decided to conclude the mandate of the Inter-Agency Working Group under the Committee's remit.**

VII. Summary of information items

A. Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries

42. Further to the electronic review and endorsement of the progress report in advance of the session, the Committee took note of the progress report on the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, submitted to HLCP by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [76/258](#), in which CEB and HLCP had been invited to support the coordination and follow-up of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action on a system-wide basis. The Chair recalled that the Office had proposed that HLCP dedicate a specific agenda item in 2026 to discuss the United Nations system's input to the midterm review of the Doha Programme of Action.

B. UN-Energy, UN-Oceans and UN-Water

43. The Committee also took note of the progress reports on the work carried out by UN-Water and UN-Energy, submitted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which served as their secretariat, and the progress report on the work carried

out by UN-Oceans, submitted by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea in the Office of Legal Affairs.

Conclusion

44. **The Committee took note of the progress made in the context of the Doha Programme of Action for the least developed countries, UN-Water, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans. It requested the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to prepare a succinct note elaborating on its proposal to dedicate an agenda item to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action in 2026, for the Committee's consideration at its fifty-first session.**

VIII. Dates and location of the fifty-first session of the Committee

45. It was proposed that the fifty-first session of the Committee be held in New York on 24 and 25 March 2026.

Conclusion

46. **The Committee approved the dates and location of its fifty-first session: 24 and 25 March 2026 in New York.**

Annex I

Agenda

1. High-level Committee on Programmes at 50 (HLCP@50): reflection on United Nations system coordination in times of transition
2. Progress beyond gross domestic product (GDP)
3. Transnational organized crime
4. Demographic change for sustainable development
5. The use and governance of artificial intelligence and related frontier technologies
6. Summary of information items
7. Dates and location of the fifty-first session of the Committee

Annex II

List of participants

Acting Chair: Ms. Diene Keita (United Nations Population Fund)

Secretary: Ms. Xenia von Lilien (High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination)

<i>Entity</i>	<i>Name</i>
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Beth Crawford
International Atomic Energy Agency	Nuno Luzio
	Constanze Westervoss
International Fund for Agricultural Development	Ron Hartman
International Monetary Fund	Robert Powell
International Organization for Migration	Ugochi Daniels
International Telecommunication Union	Tomas Lamanauskas (presenter)
	Ursula Wynhoven
International Trade Centre	Iris Hauswirth
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS	Angeli Achrekar
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Sajjad Malik
Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization	Emma Webb
United Nations	
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	Björg Sandkjær
Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Peacebuilding Support Office	Awa Dabo
Executive Office of the Secretary-General	Karima El Korri
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Hansjoerg Strohmeier
Office for Disarmament Affairs	Rebecca Jovin
Office for Outer Space Affairs	Driss El Hadani
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	Francesco Motta
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	Candice Welsch
	Jeremy Douglas (presenter)
United Nations Children's Fund	Carlos Acosta
United Nations Development Programme	Marcos Neto

<i>Entity</i>	<i>Name</i>
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Annex III

United Nations system common messages on policy responses to demographic change

I. Context and background¹

A. The demographic landscape of many countries is changing rapidly

1. Global demographic trends underpin significant transformations that profoundly impact sustainable development. Demographic changes – including changes in the size, age structure and spatial distribution of the population – affect virtually all goals on the development agenda. They affect efforts to reduce poverty and hunger; ensure food, energy and water security; provide housing, health services and education; create jobs and income; finance social protection and pensions; and grow economies. These shifts have implications for inclusive and sustainable development, including for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment across the life course. Population dynamics can also intersect with climate change, environmental degradation and inequality to heighten exposure to disaster risks, reshaping vulnerabilities and resilience capacities.

2. Against this background it is vital that demographic change receives an explicit focus in the joint support of United Nations agencies to countries. Key demographic trends that are impacting people and societies across the globe include:

- **Broad variations in population trends between and within world regions and countries.** Although the world’s population continues to grow, with an expected addition of 2 billion people over the next 50–60 years, population growth rates vary significantly across regions and countries. Some nations are experiencing rapid growth, while others are facing population decline. By 2054, the population is projected to double in 9 countries, while in 63 countries, currently hosting 1 in 4 people globally, the population size peaked before 2024 and is expected to decline further owing to sustained low fertility and in some cases high levels of emigration.² Fertility rates have reached low or very low levels in a growing number of high- and middle-income countries. More than two thirds of the world’s population now live in countries with a total fertility rate below the replacement level of approximately 2.1 births per woman.³
- **Population ageing.** Population ageing signals the extraordinary collective success in improving the living conditions and health of billions of people around the world. Better sanitation and medical therapies, greater access to education and family planning and strides towards gender equality and women’s empowerment have all contributed to, and in some cases benefited from, the steady move from high to low levels of fertility and mortality, resulting in significant changes in population age structures. Over several decades, both the number and population share of older persons have risen globally, while the share of children and youth has begun to shrink. The global number of persons aged 65 or higher is projected to double over the next 30 years, with the majority

¹ The context and background draw from and further elaborate on content in the terms of reference of the HLCP task team on demographic change of the High-level Committee on Programmes (available at [https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/HLCPIS1-CRP.3-Rev1-Draft ToR-HLCP Task Team on Demographic Change.pdf](https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/HLCPIS1-CRP.3-Rev1-Draft%20ToR-HLCP%20Task%20Team%20on%20Demographic%20Change.pdf)).

² See United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results* (United Nations publication, 2024).

³ Ibid.

residing in low- and middle-income countries.⁴ While many countries still have relatively large youth populations, including most populations in sub-Saharan Africa, ageing is a reality in all countries. Population ageing, in particular if it is occurring very rapidly, presents challenges for societies in adapting social security systems, health services, care and support systems and labour markets, with crucial gender dimensions. For instance, an older woman is twice as likely to live alone⁵ and significantly more likely to lack access to adequate social protection (including pensions) than an older man.⁶ At the same time, population ageing presents opportunities for leveraging the experience and contributions that older persons make to their families, local communities, societies and economies more broadly.

- **Migration and changes in spatial distribution.** While a far greater number of people migrate within countries (in particular from rural to urban areas) than between countries, the number of international migrants has doubled in the past 30 years, reaching 304 million in 2024, with most international migration being intraregional.⁷ The level of forced displacement is the highest on record in the modern era, with more than 123 million people forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, disasters, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.⁸ Although international migrants constitute a small share of the global population (less than 4 per cent),⁹ their contribution to inclusive growth and sustainable development is substantial in countries of origin, transit and destination. Facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, while also addressing the vulnerabilities associated with irregular migration, is essential to uphold the human rights of all migrants and to safeguard lives and dignity. Within countries, recent decades have also seen large-scale changes in the spatial distribution of populations, with increasing shares residing in urban areas. Unplanned urban growth and internal migration, often driven by disasters caused by natural hazards and climate change, are key risk multipliers.

B. Limited insights into global demographic trends can risk shaping narratives and policies that fall short of addressing actual needs

3. While the underlying causes and implications of these trends continue to evolve, many Member States are navigating both the long-standing concerns about rapid population growth and more recent concerns about low fertility, population ageing and decline. In these contexts, framings that fall short of the standards and norms established in various intergovernmental agreements risk undermining human rights, reinforcing ageism and reversing decades of progress in gender equality and women's

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See <https://data.unwomen.org/features/caring-carers-recognizing-rights-and-contributions-older-women>.

⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, "Older women: inequality at the intersection of age and gender", advocacy brief (2022). Available at https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Advocacy-Brief_Older-Women.pdf.

⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "International migrant stock 2024: key facts and figures" (January 2025). Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.

⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends Report 2024* (16 June 2024).

⁹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "International migrant stock 2024".

empowerment, in particular regarding sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and economic participation. At the same time, negative narratives on international migration disavow the rights of migrants and their positive contributions to the economic and social development of countries of origin and destination.

4. Against this background, the United Nations system should consistently promote an evidence-based, rights-based and gender responsive discourse on ways to anticipate and adapt to the macro-level implications of demographic changes. Such discourse must be grounded in established intergovernmental frameworks,¹⁰ avoid all forms of discrimination and inform national development strategies, policies and programmes, thereby strengthening efforts to foster inclusive social and economic development.

5. While effective collaboration on selected demographic topics – such as ageing, youth, migration, sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality – or population groups is well established within the United Nations system, discussions on these issues and their intersections can be strengthened and further integrated into the system’s support to Member States in developing cross-sectoral policy responses to demographic change whether at the global, regional or country level. In order to promote such system-wide coordination and policy coherence, foster inter-agency dialogue and provide practical guidance to United Nations entities for their engagement with Member States and other stakeholders, the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) has convened a time-bound task team on demographic change. As an initial output, the task team has developed a set of common messages outlining core principles for policy responses that address the challenges and leverage the opportunities of demographic change, which are grounded in evidence and system-wide experience. In subsequent phases of the task team’s work, the common messages will serve as the basis for development of a coherent, principled and forward-looking United Nations system-wide approach to demographic change, to enhance the system’s policy coherence, strengthen its advocacy and provide more effective support to Member States in navigating the demographic transformations of the twenty-first century.

II. Common messages

6. The aim of common messages on demographic change was to be concise, clear and actionable. They serve as a communications tool to ensure that all United Nations entities speak with one voice when engaging with Member States and other stakeholders on critical issues around demographic change, in a way that aligns with global commitments and promotes an integrated, rights-based and gender-responsive approach to demographic changes.

7. The common messages, based on data and evidence, underscore the relevance of demographic change for key areas of the United Nations development agenda, as well as the importance of ensuring that any policy response will respect, protect and further the fundamental values and principles on which the United Nations is based, notably the respect for human rights, the advancement of gender equality and the promotion of international cooperation to address the world’s foremost social,

¹⁰ This initiative will build upon and create synergies with key global frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), the Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations.

economic, environmental and political challenges. The messages are structured around five cross-cutting thematic areas.

A. All responses to demographic change should uphold human rights and empower all people to make choices

8. Today's world is characterized by significant diversity in demographic indicators, including rates of population growth or decline, age structure, fertility, mortality and migration. Whether a country is experiencing high or low fertility, policies should be aimed at protecting individual rights and choices regarding the number and timing of children. Decades ago, the main threats to rights and choices often arose in contexts of high fertility and rapid population growth. Today, such threats may also arise in contexts of low fertility and ageing or declining populations or in situations of voluntary or forced population mobility. United Nations officials should be cognizant of the increasing need for assistance in developing effective, evidence- and rights-based responses to challenges and opportunities that come with demographic change and encourage Member States:

(a) To prioritize human rights, dignity and individual well-being in their responses to demographic change, ensuring that people are at the centre of development strategies; empowering all individuals, especially women and girls and young people, to make free, informed decisions about their bodies, lives and futures, and strengthening legal and policy frameworks for equality and non-discrimination, aligned with international human rights standards;

(b) To encourage a focus on supporting couples and individuals to achieve their fertility preferences and thereby close the gap between desired and actual fertility rates, rather than a focus on numerical fertility targets set by Governments;

(c) To uphold reproductive rights in all settings; ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, including for family planning, information and education; include at all levels, as appropriate, of formal and non-formal schooling, education about population and health issues, including sexual and reproductive health issues; reduce unsafe abortions; and ensure access to safe abortion where it is legal. In contexts where fertility rates are low or declining, backsliding on women's or reproductive rights can reinforce harmful gender norms and stereotypes and undermine individual autonomy and well-being, while not resulting in a sizeable or sustainable fertility increase;

(d) To create enabling conditions to address the biological, social and economic barriers to childbearing and child-rearing, including ensuring access to high-quality and affordable healthcare, education and childcare; promoting gender equality in both the workplace and the home; and expanding work-family balance policies, to address the fact that in today's world many do not achieve their desired family size;

(e) To combat ageism while recognizing the unique needs and contributions of older people, in order to protect the human rights and dignity of older persons, in particular older women who face intersecting forms of discrimination, and to promote intergenerational solidarity;

(f) To promote rights- and evidence-based inclusive narratives that recognize the contributions of all members of society and that counter stereotypes related to age, gender or migration status, as well as prejudice and all forms of discrimination;

(g) To ensure the respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of migrants, regardless of migration status, including through an intersectional lens that

addresses the specific risks faced by female migrants, as well as other groups experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination;

(h) To ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of all groups, including the most marginalized, in decision-making and local planning and governance processes.

B. Building inclusive economies and cohesive societies is crucial to realizing the opportunities and minimizing the costs associated with demographic change

9. The effectiveness of policy responses to demographic shifts hinges on the foundations of inclusive economies where everyone – regardless of income, age, sex, race, ethnicity, disability, migratory status or other relevant characteristics – has the opportunity to contribute and thrive, and on cohesive societies where all individuals share a sense of belonging, solidarity and mutual trust and respect. To this end, the United Nations system will continue to support Member States:

(a) To enable full and productive employment and decent work for all, recognizing that achieving this requires favourable macroeconomic and business conditions to facilitate firm start-up and expansion, as well as equipping current and future workers to contribute fully to societies through inclusive education, skill-development and labour market policies that address structural and entry barriers for marginalized groups, promote gender equality, respond to different life stages and caregiving responsibilities, and realize the benefits of demographic and gender dividends and “silver economies”;

(b) To strengthen fiscally sustainable social protection systems, including social protection floors, to provide income security and effective access to health services and social care throughout the life course, invest in care services to ensure a fair distribution of resources so that individuals of all ages receive the necessary care and support, and encourage the development of private savings and financial transfer mechanisms;

(c) To strengthen policies that support older persons in finding and retaining employment, and encourage older persons to remain in the workforce, while ensuring that they have access to equitable and sustainable social protection systems if they no longer wish or no longer have the productive capacity to continue working;

(d) To promote gender equality by enacting appropriate policies, including labour, family, financial and education and training policies, to ensure that women’s engagement in the labour force is on equal terms with that of men, by recognizing and valuing the unpaid care and domestic work performed by women, while creating an enabling environment that encourages men to assume their fair share, and by creating decent job opportunities for women;

(e) To create more opportunities for productive employment, with fair wages, decent working conditions and greater prospects for career development, including by leveraging digital technologies. This is especially important in those countries where the number of young people entering the labour market is projected to grow rapidly, so that migration can be a choice and not a necessity;

(f) To enhance the availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration in a manner that facilitates labour mobility and decent work, reflecting demographic and labour market realities, optimizes education opportunities, upholds the right to family life, responds to the needs of migrants and refugees in a situation of vulnerability and minimizes the “brain drain” for countries of origin; promote the

economic integration and social inclusion of migrants in countries of destination, including by combating discrimination in the workplace, providing access to basic services and addressing language and other barriers; and support the reintegration of migrants and refugees upon return to their home countries, as well as populations displaced within their home countries, by providing access to social protection, employment opportunities and financial services.

C. Investing in human capital and healthy ageing across the life course equips societies for demographic change

10. Sustained investment in human capital – the knowledge, skills, and health of a population – throughout the life course is paramount for effectively addressing the economic and social challenges and opportunities of demographic change. Realizing human capabilities requires early and continuous investment in universal health coverage (including sexual and reproductive health services and addressing noncommunicable diseases), nutrition, quality and market-relevant education (from early childhood to higher learning, vocational training and lifelong learning) and decent work for young people, adults and older persons. To this end, the United Nations system will continue to support Member States:

(a) To promote a life-course approach to health that supports maternal, newborn and child health, recognizes adolescent health as critical and invests in adult and older persons' health; ensures access to sexual and reproductive health services; encourages measures to prevent substance abuse; addresses mental health issues; and promotes active and healthy lifestyles and the prevention of noncommunicable diseases. The individual and collective benefits of a life-course approach to health range from enhancing productivity during working years to extending active and productive lives, improving overall quality of life and facilitating more sustainable public health spending across all ages;

(b) To promote healthy ageing through the provision of preventive, treatment and rehabilitation services as well as care and support throughout the life course and ensure that these are fully integrated in universal health coverage;

(c) To strengthen care and support systems to offer integrated person-centred care as close as possible to where people live in order to allow people to age in place, assist family members in their caregiving roles – especially women, who bear a disproportionate burden – and provide comprehensive services towards the end of life;

(d) To provide quality, affordable and market-relevant education, healthcare and social protection for children and younger persons as a prerequisite for their later successful entry into the labour market and for unlocking a demographic dividend, while also building a robust system of lifelong learning opportunities, including with a focus on green and digital skills;

(e) To facilitate the recognition of migrants' skills, qualifications and competences acquired abroad, and provide inclusive and equitable quality education to all migrant children and young people, including early childhood education, formal schooling and on-the-job and vocational training, language training, digital literacy and access to digital learning opportunities, so that migrant children and youth can overcome social and economic barriers;

(f) To comply with ethical recruitment practices and actively invest in the development and training of skilled labour, especially in countries seeking to recruit workers from abroad, to help ensure that the emigration of highly educated individuals does not stifle sustainable development in home communities or exacerbate inequality between countries in access to human capital.

D. Facing future challenges requires fostering sustainable, inclusive and resilient communities

11. The intertwined challenges of a shifting global population and changing ecosystems demand a fundamental rethinking of how we live. Meeting the needs of current and future generations, especially those living in poverty, without imposing unsustainable and irreversible damages on the natural environment – air, land, water and the climate – is the foremost challenge of sustainable development today and encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals. Today, the world population is approximately 8.2 billion strong, and it is forecast that, by the 2080s, it will have grown by an additional 2 billion, according to the medium variant of the United Nations population projections. In this regard, the United Nations system will continue to support Member States:

(a) To shift towards sustainable consumption and production, as even shrinking populations will have large environmental impacts if consumption and production patterns are not changed;

(b) To shift towards a policy and governance approach which prioritizes investments in social, economic, human and planetary health and well-being and puts people at the centre of policy and decision-making;

(c) To advance sustainable urban planning and design, and build age-friendly, safe, accessible and smart cities to ensure inclusive, resilient communities for all generations;

(d) Where relevant, to foster innovative approaches for adaptation to respond to depopulation and ageing in rural areas;

(e) To enhance the capacity of communities to withstand, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses, including conflicts, disaster and the resulting population displacement; integrate demographic intelligence into disaster risk reduction strategies and recovery plans to ensure that risk planning reflects population dynamics, vulnerabilities and resilience capacities; and understand how the needs of conflict-affected populations may vary by age, sex and other characteristics and tailor humanitarian interventions and peacebuilding efforts accordingly;

(f) To promote sustainable agriculture while preserving valuable natural lands, including recognizing and supporting the contributions of Indigenous and women farmers, who are often custodians of local ecosystems and biodiversity;

(g) To conduct detailed mapping of populations exposed to natural and human-caused hazards, as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks, and mapping of local characteristics such as poverty, infrastructure and services to develop effective early warning systems; strengthen disaster preparedness for response and recovery; and guide climate adaptation strategies that anticipate displacement risks and prioritize the voices and needs of women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

E. Governance and planning must be strengthened with demographic understanding and foresight

12. Complete and reliable data on the number, characteristics (including age and sex) and spatial distribution of the population are a prerequisite for effective, evidence- and rights-based policymaking and planning at the national and local levels. The timely production of transparent and replicable projections, at the national and subnational levels, of how population trends are likely to unfold and with what degree

of probability are critical for Governments and other relevant stakeholders to assess future service needs and demands, plan infrastructure, anticipate the impact of disaster and climate risks and create more adaptive and effective institutions. The United Nations system stands ready to support Member States:

(a) To strengthen their capacity to collect, analyse, disseminate and use population data, disaggregated by relevant dimensions, leveraging regional, South-South and triangular cooperation and complying with the latest international standards and recommendations endorsed by the Statistical Commission, including the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and in line with the right to privacy and data protection standards;

(b) To develop national population data systems that are anchored in official statistics and foundational data sources, such as censuses, surveys, civil registration and vital statistics systems and other administrative sources, and with national data governance mechanisms promoting data integration and interoperability;

(c) To conduct population and housing censuses as part of the 2030 World Population and Housing Census Programme (2025–2034), taking into account the fourth revision of the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, to ensure that policymaking and development planning at the national and local levels are based on complete, accurate and timely data, as well as to maintain up-to-date sampling frames for surveys and update population registers;

(d) To continue to support the fielding of specialized sample survey programmes which provide essential demographic and health data and estimates, in particular for low- and middle-income countries where administrative data are not widely available;

(e) To strengthen civil registrations to ensure that all vital events are recorded; that all people, especially children, women and marginalized population groups, have a legal identity to safeguard their fundamental rights and guarantee access to education, healthcare, social security and other essential services; and that vital statistics are used to generate timely, accurate and disaggregated demographic data to support policymaking and programmes;

(f) To more systematically use population estimates and projections in the formulation of foresight-driven development strategies, policies, programmes and budgets. Population projections offer important insights into the changing characteristics of the population (notably numbers, age structure, location), and the changing demand for essential goods and services, including health, education, labour markets, pensions, social protection, housing, water and sanitation, infrastructure, digital services and innovations. They thus provide critical evidence for the allocation of public budgets at the federal and local levels, for critical public investments and reforms, and to ensure inclusive access, affordability, accessibility and equitable adoption of these services across different population groups;

(g) To develop new demographic indicators and tools that bring together different data sources, including geospatial information, and dimensions of demographic change, taking into account the diversity of the population, levels of statistical capacity and the interlinkages with other disciplines and areas of work;

(h) To enhance demographic and risk data collection, interoperability and accessibility, and apply foresight approaches to anticipate future demographic shifts and their implications for resilience and sustainability.