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General Debate 3 (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

3 (b): Special theme of the fiftieth session² of the Commission based on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation

Statement submitted by Asabe Shehu Yar Adua Foundation (ASYARF), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council³

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

¹ E/CN.9/2017/1.

² Changing population age structures and sustainable development.

³ The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Implications of changing population age structures and sustainable development

This statement aims to highlight some of the socioeconomic challenges that may arise as a result of changing population age structures in sub-Saharan Africa.

The United Nations recently projected that Africa's population will grow from 1.4 billion in 2010 to 2.1 billion by 2050.

It went further to state that the projected growth will be driven largely by the least developed countries within the sub-Saharan region, where according to the projection, the population is estimated to increase from 1.2 billion to 1.8 billion.

In the same vein, the projection also estimated that 30 of the 49 sub-Saharan Africa countries will most likely double their population by 2050.

During the time under review, the sub-Saharan African countries are expected to witness an increase in rural-urban migration, leading to a remarkable reduction in the percentage of the population living in the rural areas. This development will also imply that untold pressure will be exerted upon the existing social infrastructures that are already grossly inadequate.

About 43 per cent of the total population of sub-Saharan Africa is around the age of 15.

This implies that the population is very youthful therefore there will be a steady supply of labour force to support the economies of the subregion and this will ultimately provide African countries with an impetus for accelerated economic growth known as the demographic dividend if the expanded labour force is well educated, skilled, healthy and gainfully employed.

Possible effects of changing population age structure on economic growth, inflation, property prices and the development of financial markets may include the following:

A reduction in the labour force will affect the potential growth rate which is predicated on the consistent supply of workers, capital and productivity.

Increasing urbanization will imply that rural labour is attracted to migrate from the low productivity agriculture areas to the higher productivity of modern manufacturing and service industry zones.

Labour quality could improve due to better education. Increasing number of people within the university standard education age bracket will reduce the illiteracy level.

The improved pool of quality i.e. better educated workers means that with a constant labour supply, there should be productivity growth and improvement.

In the case of Nigeria, the National Bureau of Statistics in its 2013 estimates put Nigeria's population at 173.6 million. This estimate is expected to increase to between 188 million and 221 million by the year 2020.

Similarly, Nigeria's National Population Commission's 2013 population estimates captured the unemployment situation in Nigeria as follows:

- (a) Unemployment — 13.3 per cent
- (b) Underemployment — 19.3 per cent
- (c) Youth unemployment/Underemployment — 49.5 per cent

According to a UNFPA report, Nigeria is now the sixth most populated nation in the world after China, India, USA, Indonesia and Brazil.

The National Bureau of Statistics in a 2016 report put Nigeria's population growth rate at 3.2 per cent. Demographers consider this growth rate to be exponential and capable of causing population explosion which in turn, will translate to more unemployment and poverty.

Continued population growth and changing population age structures may affect Nigeria negatively or positively depending on the government's plans or failure to plan.

Conclusively, it is pertinent to use this medium to recommend that the governments of the underdeveloped countries and particularly Nigeria institute proactive and pragmatic measures in critical areas such as health, food, housing, and other social infrastructures to address those socioeconomic challenges that are bound to arise from population growth and changing population age structures in their respective countries.
