



Opening Ceremony
Tours, 18 July 2005

Statement by M. Kunio Waki

Deputy Executive Director
(Programme)
United Nations Population Fund

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
220 East 42 Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10017
United States of America

Mr. President,

Excellencies, IUSSP colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of UNFPA, to address the 25th General Conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. This Conference is the second in the new millennium and as such, it takes on particular significance as the world community this year renews its commitment to the Millennium Declaration and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The MDGs are a unifying global force for action to reduce extreme poverty and hunger, to combat high levels of maternal and child mortality and the spread of HIV/AIDS, and to promote gender equality and sustainable development. This Conference also holds particular significance as we take stock of eleven years of implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by governments in Cairo at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, ICPD.

As we all know, population dynamics affect all areas of development. Today, in both developed and developing countries, their consequences are a subject of intense public debate and policy making. It is now widely recognized that the elimination of poverty and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved unless greater attention is paid to population issues and the broader population and development agenda that was adopted 11 years ago in Cairo.

We meet at a critical time—a time when population paradigms have gone far beyond demographics and demographic targets to focus on empowering the most marginalized and vulnerable groups, particularly women and young people, and protecting and upholding the rights and dignity of all human beings.

Sustained and quality reproductive health care and services targeting underserved and poor communities are necessary to break the vicious circle of poverty, ignorance, ill health, low human capital, low economic productivity, high fertility and high infant and maternal mortality that plague individuals and communities. Sexual and reproductive health services are necessary to curb the risks of exposure to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and to limit and check abuses, gender based violence and harmful practices.

The last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed an unprecedented and historical demographic and social transition of the world population. Structural and perhaps irreversible changes in mortality, fertility, family formation, childbearing, ageing and migration patterns have shaped the lives of many individuals and families across the globe. These changes have prompted a number of economic and social policy interventions locally and globally, which have helped redefine the social, economic and cultural parameters of what is called quality of life and sustainable human development.

These changes have occurred at a time when other fundamental assumptions such as social equity, equal opportunity, gender equality and freedom from fear and want were redefined from a universal human rights perspective. They have occurred in social, political and governance contexts that have been increasingly under pressure to be more sensitive to people's rights in managing their own lives and to their legitimate claim for a decent and dignified life and for more transparency and accountability of public office.

Persistent fertility decline has also caused a significant change in the population structure in many countries and prompted a new phenomenon of population ageing. The combination of low fertility, ageing and the high standards of living in the developed world raises today a number of concerns about stagnation of population growth or even a possible

future decline in population numbers in many OECD countries and countries with economies in transition. These discussions are going on at a time when the world is witnessing a sustained pattern of population movement and an increased level of internal and international migration that is growing in importance and complexity by the day.

It is clear that whatever the level or stage of development of human societies, an in-depth analysis of population dynamics is required to inform and guide the formulation of responsive social and economic policies.

It is also clear that stronger and more integrated policy responses are needed to meet today's unprecedented demographic trends.

In the same way that population policies were devised in the 1960s, 70s and 80s (and are still very much required today in places with high population pressure) to manage population growth, adequate population and social development analysis and policies are now required to research and inform programmes and interventions to support individuals and families to achieve their family, fertility and movement choices.

Today UNFPA renews its commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action and to the achievement of the MDGs. We also renew our commitment to supporting population sciences and the community of demographers and population professionals to advance our knowledge of the linkages between population, poverty eradication and development, to document best practices, inform policies, monitor progress and develop the most appropriate cost effective tools to support this objective.

We wish the deliberations of the 25th General Conference of the IUSSP a great success.

Thank you.