

**STATEMENT TO THE FORTIETH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT
REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON WORLD DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS
(E/CN.9/2007/6)**

**AGENDA ITEM 5. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE PROGRAMME OF
WORK IN THE FIELD OF POPULATION**

**MS. VASANTHA KANDIAH
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
POPULATION DIVISION, DESA
UNITED NATIONS**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have the honour to introduce today document E/CN.9/2007/6 entitled *World Demographic Trends*. The report presents an overview of global demographic trends based on results from the *2004 Revision of World Population Prospects*. I wish to inform you that the *2006 Revision of World Population Prospects* was released last month. A copy of the *Highlights* from the *2006 Revision* can be found in the back of the room. Although the 2006 Revision projects a 2050 population that is slightly higher than the one projected by the *2004 Revision* (9.2 billion instead of 9.1 billion), general population trends are very similar in both *Revisions*. For consistency with the report you are considering, I will use here *2004 Revision* figures.

The world's population continues to grow. It is estimated at 6.6 billion today and it is expected to increase by about two and a half billion to reach 9.1 billion in 2050. Most of you may already be familiar with this number because it has been made famous by none other than former United States Vice-President Al Gore who used it in his documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. In case you have not seen the film yet, here is the slide showing the increase of population from 2.5 billion in 1950 to 6.6 billion in 2007 and, to 9.1 billion in 2050. The increase between now and 2050 will almost exclusively take place in the less developed regions of the world.

Future fertility levels are key determinants of the expected population growth in developing countries. Fertility rates have declined almost everywhere since 1950. This slide shows fertility rates in 1950. Women in countries shaded red had more than 5 children on average. Those countries are mainly developing countries. Only a handful of countries had below replacement fertility then. The situation has changed dramatically by 2000-2005. Many countries had reached below-replacement fertility by that time and in many others women were having less than 3 children per woman. However, there were still a number of countries where fertility was above 4 children per woman. Those countries where fertility levels remain high will be growing very fast. Among the high fertility countries, there are more than a dozen countries where fertility has not yet started to decline, most of them belonging to the group of least developed countries. And there

are as many as 44 countries where total fertility is still above four children per woman. Partly because of the rapid growth expected in many developing countries, more than half of them consider their population growth too high. There is growing recognition among developing countries that the further reduction of population growth is necessary to ease mounting pressure on renewable and non-renewable resources and on the environment and to facilitate the achievement of all major development goals.

High fertility tends to be associated with low contraceptive prevalence. In Africa, where fertility is still very high with an average of 4.7 children per woman, contraceptive prevalence is only 27 per cent of currently married women, much lower than the average for the less developed regions as a whole, which stands at 59 per cent of currently married women.

As a result of declining fertility

