



**UNFPA intervention at the initial consultations on
the Zero Draft of the Rio+20 Outcome Document
New York, 26 January 2012**

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Mr. Co-Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

People are the central concern of sustainable development and efforts to promote more sustainable development pathways must take account of people – their numbers, location and age structures, as well as their living conditions, ambitions and opportunities. The focus on people is the key to a stronger integration of the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

World population has now surpassed the 7 billion mark, but 1 out of 7 persons continues to live in extreme poverty. Efforts to reduce poverty, ensure food security and create full and decent employment for a growing world population, require not only a more equitable distribution of resources, but also depend on higher economic output. And higher economic growth will place mounting pressures on all natural resources.

To address the dual challenge of improving the quality of life of a growing population, while reducing the impact on the environment, the Rio declaration of 1992, Principle 8, called for a two pronged approach: a shift towards more sustainable consumption and production – which is the hallmark of the green economy – and appropriate demographic policies.

Demography is not destiny. Population dynamics can be addressed through human-rights based policies, that are encouraged by the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and indeed the Millennium Development Goals. We must ensure universal access to reproductive health care and family planning, increase investment in education, and effectively support the empowerment of women and youth. Together these measures improve the quality of life of populations. They reduce infant, child and maternal mortality and help arrest the spread of communicable diseases. They also help to meet unmet needs for family planning, reduce fertility and slow population growth, and thereby create the conditions for the best balance between populations and the environment.

Sustainable development cannot be separated from population dynamics -- changes in size, geographic distribution and age structures – and population dynamics cannot be addressed without human-rights based policies – as Governments acknowledged two decades ago. The

neglect of these linkages in the zero draft is a step back, which if not addressed, will undermine a credible agenda on sustainable development.

As you may be aware, the World Economic Forum just published its latest Global Risks Report. This report identifies five major risks to global stability and sustainability, and one of these is population dynamics. In conclusion allow me to read the last two sentences of a joint statement by the Global Agenda Councils of the World Economic Forum and UNFPA on sustainable development.

I quote:

“We reaffirm the global commitment to poverty reduction and sustainability, and emphasize that we will not reach these objectives without addressing the nexus among water, food, energy and population dynamics. Moving forward, governments, the private sector and civil society need to take population dynamics into consideration.”

End of quote.

UNFPA is committed to supporting the development of a strong agenda on sustainable development.