United Nations System CEB/2026/2/Add.1

Chief Executives Board for Coordination

Distr.: General
29 October 2026

Original: English
Advance unedited version

Second regular session of 2026
Manhasset, New York, 29 and 30 October 2026

United Nations system common approach on Demographic Change

I. Introduction

1. Informed by consultations with entities across all levels of the organizations, the United Nations (UN) System Common Approach on Demographic Change is designed to provide a system-wide strategic framework encompassing the global, regional, country and local levels in order to promote coherence in how the UN system supports Member States in navigating demographic change. It responds to the need identified by the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) at its forty-ninth session in April 2025 and builds on the United Nations System Common Messages on Policy Responses to Demographic Change, endorsed by the Chief Executives Board (CEB) in October 2025, to further position the UN as a thought leader in navigating demographic change. It aims at raising awareness at all levels of UN entities, including senior leadership. It promotes strategic and scalable responses to demographic realities that are based on evidence and foresight and grounded in the principles of respect for human rights, non-discrimination, leaving no one behind, gender equality, age-sensitivity, economic and social inclusion, intergenerational solidarity and sustainability.

2. The Common Approach has been developed to foster inclusive collaboration, while recognizing entities' respective mandates and leveraging existing inter-agency mechanisms on topics such as youth, population ageing, international migration and gender. The Approach will enable the UN system to better anticipate future demands and intergenerational dynamics related to changing demographic realities and deliver a more coordinated response, while also strengthening coherence of this work across existing mandates on development, humanitarian action, climate and disaster risk reduction.

3. The Common Approach takes stock of the global landscape of demographic change and of the gaps in the UN system response (section II); establishes key strategic objectives for collective action (section III); outlines a framework for a shared understanding of the demographic opportunities and challenges at different stages of the demographic transition (section IV); identifies strategic entry points for engagement at global, regional, country and local levels (section V); and sets out key actions to advance its implementation (section VI).

Please recycle

4. The Common Approach seeks to leverage synergies with the UN80 Initiative agenda and related reform efforts. As the UN80 reform process and its workstreams continue to evolve, opportunities for collaboration on knowledge, data and expertise could help strengthen the availability and use of demographic evidence and foresight across the UN system, while promoting coherence and avoiding duplication. In articulating its objectives for the collective efforts of the UN system in this field, the Common Approach identifies opportunities for complementary action for consideration by other inter-agency coordination mechanisms, in particular the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), which is the appropriate mechanism to provide guidance to support implementation of the Approach at country and local levels, thematic inter-agency groups and regional coordination platforms.

II. Understanding the issue

A. The current global landscape of demographic trends and public discourse

5. 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 also intersect with climate change, environmental degradation and inequality to heighten exposure to disaster risks, reshaping vulnerabilities and resilience capacities. Rapid digitalization also affects (and is affected by) demographic changes and presents opportunities but also challenges to inclusive development. 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 due to sustained low fertility and in some cases high levels of emigration.[1] Fertility rates have reached low or very low levels in a growing number of high- and middle-income countries.[2] 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 mortality and fertility, 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 residing in low- and middle-income countries.[4] While many countries still have relatively large youth populations,

[1] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). World Population Prospects 2024, Online Edition.
[2] In 2024, nearly one fifth of all countries and areas were experiencing total fertility rates implying fewer than 1.4 live births per woman over a lifetime. Source: ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

including most populations in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab Region, 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 nearly twice as likely to live alone[5] 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. Moreover, the silver economy drives demand for healthcare, tourism and age-friendly housing and financial services.

- **Migration and changes in spatial distribution:** The number of international migrants has doubled in the past 30 years, reaching 304 million in 2024, with most international migration being intra-regional.[7] The level of forced displacement is the highest on record in the modern era as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, disasters, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.[8] Demographic imbalances between regions, including ageing in high-income countries and labour surpluses in some regions, are reshaping labour mobility, especially care-related migration. 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 heightened risks, rights violations and structural barriers that migrants might face, is essential to uphold the human rights of all migrants and to safeguard lives and dignity. A far greater number of people migrate within countries than between countries, particularly from rural to urban areas, resulting in large-scale changes in the spatial distribution of populations over the past decades. Internal migration and unplanned urban growth are often driven by lack of job opportunities, lower incomes and living standards in rural areas as well as disasters and climate change.

6. Limited insights into global demographic trends can risk shaping narratives and policies that fall short of addressing actual needs. While the underlying causes and implications of these trends continue to evolve, many Member States are navigating both the longstanding 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, for example, ageism, and reversing decades of progress in gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly regarding sexual and reproductive health and 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.

B. Gaps in the UN system response

7. Member States have long recognized the critical significance of demographic trends, establishing dedicated intergovernmental and operational institutions, notably the Commission on Population and Development,[10] with the Population Division of the UN

[5] UN DESA Policy Brief No. 186 (2026): Gender Matters in an Ageing World: The Case for Gender-responsive Policies. Available at https://desapublications.un.org/policy-briefs/un-desa-policy-brief-no-186-gender-matters-ageing-world-case-gender-responsive

[6] International Labour Organization (2024). World Social Protection Report 2024-2026.

[7] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). International Migrant Stock 2024.

[8] UN High Commissioner for Refugees. (2025, June 16). Global Trends Report 2024. UNHCR.

[9] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). International Migrant Stock 2024.

[10] Originally established as the Population Commission in 1946; renamed to Commission on Population and Development after the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994.

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) as the substantive secretariat and producer of global population estimates, projections and analyses, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) leading operational activities, and the regional commissions overseeing the regional-level assessment of the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action. These bodies have been instrumental in steering the global agenda, promoting rights-based policies, and strengthening national capacities to turn demographic data into developmental opportunities. The far-reaching implications of demographic change for sustainable development have also received increasing attention across the UN system and prompted notable efforts both by individual entities and partnerships within and beyond the system, to scale up capabilities to meet countries' policy and programming needs. However, despite these robust foundations, the implications of demographic change for implementation of UN mandates are not systematically integrated across the system and in the support provided to Member States, with constraints existing at multiple levels.

8. The primary global roadmap to end poverty, build peace and protect the planet shared by all UN entities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its monitoring framework, do not fully capture the dynamic, cumulative implications of shifting population numbers and demographic structures on development outcomes over time. [11] The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) universal benchmarks also risk overlooking the considerable regional, national and local differences in demographic situations. These gaps in the system's guiding framework mean that demographic considerations have not been systematically integrated into planning processes nor into monitoring tools. Enhancing UN capabilities to turn population data into actionable insights and apply demographic foresight to anticipate emerging trends is vital to fostering a future-ready UN system.

9. From a policy and programmatic perspective, responses to demographic shifts are inherently multi-sectoral, requiring cross-cutting technical expertise and coordinated programmatic interventions that extend beyond the mandate of any single UN entity. Amid growing demand from Member States for timely and agile technical assistance, the UN system faces a variety of constraints in mobilizing technical expertise across relevant policy domains to deliver integrated and responsive support. While relevant inter-agency coordination mechanisms exist and effectively operate at global and regional levels, they tend to focus on specific population subgroups—such as youth, older persons, or migrants—or selected aspects of demographic change, leaving room for more integrated analyses and discussions to promote a better understanding of the linkages between different demographic trends and population-level impacts in policy design and implementation. At the country level, where Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) serve as the primary coordination mechanisms for UN delivery, the 4- or 5-year cycle of the primary UN strategic planning instruments—specifically Common Country Analyses (CCAs), UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) and UN agencies' Country Programme Documents (CPDs)—may not fully capture the long-term structural changes shaping economic and social transformations, of which demographic change is a major driver, although some regions have given increased focus to demographic change in these documents. A more systematic incorporation of demographic projections, scenario analysis, and strategic foresight into CCA, UNSDCF and CPD design can make these instruments more anticipatory and forward-looking.

[11] The SDG framework focuses on relative targets around sector-specific outcomes (e.g. poverty, education, employment, housing) without accounting for changes in population size, age structure, or location. Because population dynamics form the denominator of these metrics, relative progress can obscure rising absolute numbers of people in need in high-growth countries, and more generally overlook the impact of underlying changes in demands or target populations. The framework also does not reflect well the development implications of critical age structural shifts, such as the opportunities associated with declining dependency ratios, or the fiscal and labour pressures caused by rapid population ageing. For example, SDG 5 does not capture well gender inequalities experienced across the life course, with older women often experiencing the cumulative effects of discrimination, exclusion and unequal access to resources most acutely.

10. While the strengthening of population data systems has long been one of the most substantive areas of support provided by UN system entities, with effective coordination at global, regional and national levels, this has historically been structured around data pillars (e.g. censuses, surveys, civil registration and vital statistics). Support is therefore often structured around how data are produced rather than around the policy questions countries need answered, leaving the analytical layer that connects the two without a clear home in any single pillar. In addition, the sustainability of such cooperation models is under pressure from emerging financial, governance and technological challenges, requiring more agile and streamlined approaches to promote integrated data and analytical solutions.

III. Objectives of the Common Approach

11. With a view to addressing existing gaps and challenges, the Common Approach establishes a strategic framework for collective action across the UN system. Its overarching objectives are structured around four strategic pillars:

A. Strengthening system-wide coherence and coordination

- **Ensure a demographically informed approach:** Provide a framework for understanding demographic change and its relationship to sustainable development; embed demographic analysis and foresight systematically into policy advice, strategic planning and country programming, where not already incorporated, across all UN entities.

- **Maximize synergies and avoid duplication:** Establish a common basis to connect entity-specific mandates and leverage existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms, thereby bringing together multiple efforts into a cohesive, whole-of-system response.

- **Advance agile and scalable solutions:** Identify concrete and feasible pathways that foster inter-agency collaboration in mainstreaming demographic considerations, placed in the context of UN80 and other reform initiatives, and recognizing the need for evidence-informed, agile and scalable approaches.

- **Promote cross-sectoral solutions:** Bridge sectoral silos and operationalize integrated policy solutions by leveraging the five core principles identified in the United Nations System Common Messages on Policy Responses to Demographic Change.[12]

B. Enhancing UN thought leadership and system capacities

- **Strengthen global thought leadership:** Strengthen the UN's global thought leadership in understanding and addressing demographic change and its implications, including by advancing balanced, evidence-based and rights-based discourses.

- **Leverage the UN's comparative advantage as data provider:** Reaffirm the leadership of the UN system as the authoritative provider of methodologically robust, internationally comparable demographic data, projections, and metadata and facilitator of internationally agreed population data standards, while advancing its capacity to support integrated, cost-effective, cross-sectoral data solutions.

- **Enhance internal recognition:** Promote deeper understanding and ownership of UN work on demographic change across the system, beyond technical experts, and particularly among senior leadership.

[12] These are: 1) upholding human rights and empowering individuals, 2) building inclusive economies and cohesive societies, 3) investing in human capital and healthy ageing, 4) fostering sustainable, resilient communities, 5) strengthening governance and evidence-based planning.

- **Strengthen institutional readiness:** Better equip UN system entities with analytical foresight tools and population data capacity to better anticipate, understand, and adapt to shifting demographic realities within their respective mandated areas.

C. Supporting Member States with integrated, practical advice

- **Deliver actionable demographic policy and population data support:** Provide principles, key messages and practical advice to better equip UN system entities in supporting Member States to strengthen national population data systems, apply international population data standards, measure and monitor demographic patterns and trends and strengthen policy responses to demographic change.

- **Embed demographic intelligence into country planning:** Foster the integration of population analysis, demographic projections, and scenario modelling and foresight into CCAs, UNSDCFs and CPDs where this is not yet systematic.

- **Promote the integration of demographic considerations into Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs):** Provide support to better reflect demographic change in VNRs, highlighting the constraints and opportunities arising from long-term changes in population numbers and characteristics for the achievement of development outcomes.

D. Aligning with and informing intergovernmental processes at global and regional levels

- **Promote common positions in intergovernmental forums:** Synthesize demographic evidence and policy recommendations to inform normative intergovernmental processes at global and regional levels (including the UN General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), functional commissions, regional commissions and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)); and amplify the Common Messages to advance a shared understanding of the development implications of demographic change among Member States, while recognizing national and regional contexts.

- **Enhance review frameworks beyond 2030:** Support the integration of long-term demographic analysis into the review and follow-up mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the ICPD Programme of Action, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), and other relevant development frameworks.

IV. Framework for understanding challenges and opportunities for countries at different stages of demographic transition

12. Global demographic trends have far-reaching implications for sustainable and inclusive development, respect for human rights, leaving no one behind, and gender equality. Changes in population size, age structures, fertility, mortality, migration and displacement both shape and are shaped by countries' development pathways. They affect countries differently depending on their stage in the demographic transition, level of economic development, and humanitarian, peace and security situation.

13. The Common Approach uses the stages of demographic transition as an overarching framework for examining the opportunities and challenges associated with demographic change, drawing on recent key UN publications and related global and regional analyses.[13] This framework provides a structured approach to characterize how demographic changes interact with development pathways, while recalling the five thematic areas of the Common Messages on Policy Responses to Demographic Change. The demographic transition is

[13] Including United Nations (2021, 2024), ECLAC (2024, 2025 and 2026), ESCAP (2022, 2023, 2024 and 2026), ILO (2024, 2026a and 2026b (Global Employment Trends in Ageing Societies, forthcoming)).

continuous and its delineation into stages should not be taken to imply that countries at each stage have entirely distinct characteristics or require entirely different policy responses. Rather, the stages are used as an analytical framework for identifying key policy priorities, while recognizing that many issues and policy responses are relevant across stages. The framework also does not imply that governments should pursue or impose any specific fertility or demographic targets. In all contexts, policy responses should be evidence-informed, rights-based and gender-responsive, placing people at the centre of development strategies, expanding their capabilities and enabling all individuals to make free and informed choices throughout their lives.

14. Countries today are at different stages along this continuum. Countries in early stages of the demographic transition are characterized by high levels of fertility, rapid population growth and youthful age structures and often face growing demand for education, healthcare, employment, food and infrastructure. Countries in intermediate stages experience declining fertility and expanding working-age populations, creating a time-bound opportunity to harness the demographic dividend. Countries in advanced stages of the demographic transition experience low levels of fertility, population ageing and, in a growing number of cases, population decline.

15. While many policy responses are relevant across stages, their relative importance varies with demographic circumstances. In countries at earlier stages, priorities often include investments in health, nutrition, education and skills, together with expanding opportunities for employment and youth empowerment. In countries at intermediate stages, harnessing the demographic dividend depends on inclusive labour markets, decent work, skills development and universal social protection. In countries at advanced stages of the demographic transition, priorities increasingly include adapting fiscal, labour, social protection, health and care systems, promoting age-friendly environments and lifelong learning and combating ageism, while harnessing opportunities associated with healthy longevity, productivity gains and technological innovation. Because demographic transitions can unfold rapidly and institutions and systems take time to adapt, policy responses at all stages should anticipate future demographic change. Countries at earlier stages, for instance, can begin preparing for population ageing by strengthening health, care and social protection systems and promoting lifelong learning while continuing to address their more immediate demographic priorities. Conversely, among countries at a similar broad stage of the demographic transition, demographic circumstances can differ considerably and should be carefully considered when developing policy responses. For example, very low fertility may be long-standing or recent, while the contribution of immigration and emigration to changes in population size and age structure can vary considerably across countries. In addition, national averages may conceal inequalities or demographic differences within countries and the need for localized responses. This underscores the importance of high-quality demographic data for understanding national circumstances and informing appropriate policy responses.

16. Gender equality and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and voluntary family planning are key priorities throughout the demographic transition. Realizing reproductive rights, eliminating gender-based violence and other harmful practices, and expanding access to high-quality SRHR services directly enable individuals to make free and informed choices about the number, timing, and spacing of their children. In turn, these choices reduce maternal mortality, expand girls' and women's educational and economic participation, and provide the foundation for equitable demographic transitions. Gender inequalities also shape and are shaped by demographic change because of unequal access to education and decent work, gender gaps in labour force participation, the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, and disparities in pension coverage and old-age income security. Addressing these inequalities can expand individual choices and opportunities and prevent disadvantages from accumulating over the life course, while strengthening countries’ ability to adapt to demographic change.

17. International migration is a cross-cutting dimension of demographic change that affects countries at every stage of the demographic transition. Countries at all stages can experience both immigration and emigration, with implications for population size and age structure. At the same time, demographic change can influence the scale, composition and direction of migration, including through changing labour market and skills needs and opportunities. A rights-based approach recognizes safe, orderly and regular migration as both a driver and an outcome of demographic transformation, with implications that cut across development, social inclusion, gender equality and sustainable development policy agendas.

18. Urbanization interacts with demographic change by reshaping where people live, access services and participate in economic and social life. Where urbanization is rapid, there is an opportunity to shape cities, towns and communities that are inclusive, resilient and age-friendly from the outset, creating built and social environments that are responsive to demographic change while avoiding costly retrofitting in the future. In countries with low fertility and ageing populations, cities play a critical role in adapting infrastructure, services, social protection systems and care arrangements to changing age structures. Urbanization also has important implications for rural areas through evolving urban-rural linkages that influence livelihoods, mobility, migration, food systems, service provision and regional development. Outmigration from rural areas can contribute to population ageing and changing population composition by sex and age in areas of origin, with gendered implications for service provision, livelihoods and paid and unpaid care. Urbanization also interacts with migration, climate change, inequality and disaster risk, underscoring the importance of inclusive and forward-looking urban planning.

19. Specific considerations apply to countries affected by humanitarian crises—no matter their stage in the demographic transition—where excess mortality might result from disasters, pandemics or conflicts; large scale displacement might significantly reshape the geographical distribution of the population; and national population data systems are often disrupted or become quickly outdated. A key priority in these contexts is the use of available population data (including from non-traditional data sources) and demographic intelligence and foresight to inform preparedness, response and peacebuilding solutions.

V. Entry points at global, regional, country and local levels

20. The Common Approach is built around a set of interconnected entry points at the global, regional, country and local levels, each reinforcing existing efforts to promote a coherent and system-wide response to shifting population dynamics. In line with respective mandates and under the leadership of relevant UN system entities, the entry points build on and promote connections between ongoing mandated processes and established inter-agency coordination arrangements.

A. Global entry points

21. At the global level, entry points include UN support to the intergovernmental processes through which Member States set norms, provide policy guidance, and determine strategic priorities for the work of UN entities. Engagement at this level serves three connected purposes: ensuring that intergovernmental deliberations and their outcomes are informed by demographic evidence and foresight; reflecting demographic considerations in the strategies, plans and reporting through which entities organize their own work; and using existing inter-agency mechanisms to align analysis and messaging. Much of this engagement is already under way. The added value of the Common Approach lies in making it more consistent, better sequenced around key intergovernmental moments and more visible system-wide, rather than in creating new processes.

i. Normative intergovernmental processes

22. A key entry point is the integration of demographic perspectives into the deliberations, reports and outcomes of major intergovernmental bodies. While some

processes already incorporate demographic considerations as part of their mandates, there is significant scope to strengthen demographic awareness across broader sustainable development, economic, social and human rights discussions. Entities should support the consistent use of demographic evidence and foresight; facilitate the inclusion of demographic analysis in reports of the Secretary-General and other UN reports, policy discussions, negotiated outcomes and intergovernmental dialogues; promote the Common Messages across the UN system; and build awareness through side events[14] or briefings. Demographic analysis can strengthen discussions on sustainable development, fiscal sustainability, labour markets, social inclusion, migration, ageing, care needs, intergenerational solidarity and long-term public investment. It can also strengthen the evidence base for policymaking through improved population data, projections and disaggregated statistics, while ensuring that demographic assessments reflect the diverse realities, rights and priorities of different population groups.

23. Particular opportunities exist within ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies and processes including, inter alia, the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women,[15] the Statistical Commission, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and Financing for Development follow-up as well as the General Assembly, particularly its Second and Third Committees. The HLPF provides a key platform for ensuring that demographic realities are reflected in the review of progress towards the SDGs. UN system entities providing global guidance to VNRs, thematic reviews and related reporting can support the integration of demographic dimensions and help countries to strengthen analysis of how demographic trends shape outcomes across poverty reduction, health, education, employment, social protection, housing, care systems, digital inclusion, climate resilience and infrastructure. Recent discussions within HLPF and the ECOSOC High-level Segment have already recognized the importance of demographic change. The inclusion of demographic change in the 2026 Ministerial Declaration represents a significant milestone and provides a stronger foundation for integrating demographic analysis into future HLPF deliberations, VNR reporting and broader follow-up and review processes for the 2030 Agenda including the 2027 SDG Summit.[16]

24. The 2027 SDG Summit is expected to serve as a major milestone for assessing progress towards the 2030 Agenda and identifying priorities for accelerated action during the final years of implementation. The Summit offers an invaluable opportunity to highlight the far-reaching implications of global demographic trends for sustainable development and to promote integrated, forward-looking responses to support achievement of the SDGs.

25. Reporting on the follow-up of other global agreements—which, depending on the framework may take place in the General Assembly or ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, with important components at regional and national levels—also offers important opportunities to advance a demographically informed approach. These include implementation of the Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations, the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the MIPAA, the ICPD Programme of Action review process, the Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum, the New Urban Agenda, the Doha

[14] Examples include side events jointly organized by Task Team members at the second World Summit for Social Development (Doha, November 2025) and the second International Migration Review Forum (New York, May 2026).

[15] For example, see the Chair's summary of the ministerial round table on "Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all older women" held at the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

[16] Paragraph 23 of the Ministerial Declaration reads: "We acknowledge the complex and interrelated opportunities and challenges related to demographic shifts, including rapid population growth or decline, and population ageing, and reaffirm our collective commitment to promoting intergenerational solidarity, inclusive dialogue, and social cohesion, including by creating an enabling environment to ensure a higher quality of life for all individuals throughout the life course and to achieve social development for all, leaving no one behind, as well as through social policies responsive to people of all ages."

Political Declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development, and other global commitments such as the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Common Approach strengthens the follow-up to these processes by helping to connect demographic change with long-term planning, intergenerational equity, sustainable development, strategic foresight, evidence-based policymaking and the localization of the 2030 Agenda. As noted above, there is also significant scope to strengthen demographic awareness more broadly across follow-up conferences on sustainable development, economic and social issues, finance and human rights.

26. Global economics and financing for development platforms and forums also offer strategic entry points for highlighting the relevance of demographic change for core macroeconomic, fiscal, and financing priorities, promoting deepened collaboration between UN entities, international financial institutions (IFIs) and the private sector. For example, through the ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum and the G20 Finance Track, the UN system can support the use of demographic intelligence and foresight for analysis of the macroeconomic and labour market impacts of demographic transitions (e.g. shrinking labour forces, silver economy potential, and youth employment); and promote further alignment between global fiscal policy recommendations and national demographic realities, helping Member States safeguard fiscal space for social protection, healthcare, education, and care infrastructure.

27. Human rights mechanisms, treaty bodies and special procedures provide opportunities to strengthen understanding of how demographic trends affect the realization of rights across the life course, including the implications of ageing, migration, disability, gender, displacement and changing population structures, while promoting the use of disaggregated data and demographic analysis to inform monitoring, accountability and policy responses. For instance, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities offer useful examples of age- and disability-sensitive analysis. Other committees, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on Migrant Workers and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, could benefit from more systematic use of disaggregated data and analysis of how age, sex, disability, migration, ethnicity, location, displacement, crisis and other population characteristics affect the enjoyment of rights. An important emerging entry point is the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Human Rights of Older Persons, established by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 58/13 (2025) with the mandate to elaborate a draft international legally binding instrument on the human rights of older persons. As the intergovernmental process advances, it has the potential to serve as a catalyst for greater attention to the implications of population ageing and demographic change within international human rights and development policy discussions.

28. Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council could be considered as entry points, particularly mandates that address issues closely linked to demographic change, such as the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants. These mechanisms can help connect demographic trends with country-level realities, thematic reporting, State engagement as well as national human rights institutions and civil society participation.

ii. UN system entities' strategies and plans

29. UN entities should endeavour to integrate demographic trends and realities into their strategies, programme plans and results frameworks, using rights-based, gender-responsive and intersectional analysis to identify differentiated impacts across the life course, future-proofing their mandates to the changing demographic realities of the countries and populations they serve. This includes promoting common analytical approaches, greater alignment of indicators where appropriate, and the identification of shared results within or across entities that reflect the multidimensional nature of demographic change, ensuring that

population dynamics are addressed as a cross-cutting development issue rather than as a specialized sectoral concern.

30. This also emanates from operational guidance given by the General Assembly in the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (resolution 79/226), which called on the UN development system to support Member States in responding to rapid population growth, declining birth rates, population ageing and the interlinkages between population and development. It also responds to Member States' demand for strengthened national capacity, evidence and statistical systems to address demographic change.

iii. Inter-agency coordination mechanisms

31. Inter-agency mechanisms have an essential role in contributing to the objectives of the Common Approach.

32. As recognized in the introduction, UNSDG is a critical mechanism for coordinating system-wide support to countries and supporting the integration of demographic considerations so that they are reflected in common guidance, analytical tools and operational support. The vital contribution of UNSDG is further detailed in the national and local level entry points below.

33. Existing inter-agency networks and thematic mechanisms at global, regional and national levels addressing ageing, youth, migration, social protection, health, urbanization, disability and other related issues also provide opportunities to strengthen collaboration and enhance coherence. In accordance with their respective mandates and governance arrangements, these mechanisms are encouraged to facilitate joint analysis, coordinated advocacy, shared learning and the development of common policy messages on demographic issues. Building on the mapping of interagency coordination mechanisms related to demographic change within the UN system conducted in 2025,[17] possible key actions to promote greater coherence, information-sharing and joint action among entities working on demographic issues across development, humanitarian, human rights, peace and security dimensions may include (but are not limited to) dissemination of the Common Messages to the membership of inter-agency mechanisms; more systematic information-sharing between mechanisms, such as through regular meetings of co-leads; collaboration between mechanisms on materials such as issues briefs on intersectional topics or joint messaging for intergovernmental processes; and joint briefings or side events. Inter-agency coordination mechanisms can also provide an avenue for improving population data literacy and use among UN system staff.[18]

iv. Mobilization of South-South and Triangular Cooperation

34. South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) is a programming modality mandated by Member States and articulated in numerous international agreements and UN General Assembly resolutions, including the current Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review. Global and intra-regional SSTC platforms and initiatives offer significant potential for accelerating knowledge-sharing, peer learning, and capacity-building on demographic change. UN entities can strengthen operational partnerships with existing Member State-led intergovernmental alliances and platforms, including for promoting high-level ministerial consensus on reproductive health and population and development issues; document SSTC solutions and successful practices (e.g. sharing of census technology) through UN initiatives such as South-South Galaxy, and showcase them in relevant international forums; and strengthen their role as brokers of technical knowledge by partnering with recognized centres of excellence. While global platforms and initiatives serve as centralized repositories

[17] Available at: https://www.unsceb.org/assets/media/UNS_Mapping_CoordinationMechanisms_DemographicChange.pdf

[18] For example, the Inter-agency Group on Ageing recently organized a capacity-building workshop on the World Population Prospects Data Portal, conducted by the Population Division of UN DESA.

and knowledge brokers, regional and subregional mechanisms can act as the primary operational entry points for adapting technical solutions to shared demographic realities.

B. Regional entry points

35. Regional mechanisms serve as entry points for promoting a coherent and system-wide response to demographic change by acting as a two-way bridge between global policy discussions and country-level implementation. Positioned between global normative frameworks and diverse national realities, they are uniquely placed to translate broad demographic priorities into region-specific policy considerations while ensuring that regional experiences, innovations and emerging demographic trends inform global deliberations. Through established intergovernmental platforms, regional review processes, coordination mechanisms and technical support functions, regional actors can help promote a coherent, timely and context-sensitive UN system response to demographic change.

i. Downward, translating global directions into regional context-specific policy considerations and priorities

36. Regional commissions play an essential role in contextualizing global guidance and ensuring that common messages on demographic change are reflected in regional policy discussions and review processes. Building on their convening functions, research, capacity-building and long-standing relationships with Member States, regional commissions and partner entities can help communicate demographic evidence, foresight and policy responses through UN reports prepared for regional bodies, statements by senior officials, regional policy dialogues, side events and intergovernmental meetings.

37. Particular opportunities exist in regional review and monitoring processes. The regular intergovernmental meetings of the regional commissions, including their annual sessions and regional forums on sustainable development, provide important entry points for integrating demographic analysis into regional assessments of progress towards the SDGs and for informing deliberations at the HLPF. These platforms can help strengthen understanding of how shifting population dynamics influence regional development trajectories, labour markets, social protection systems, health and care systems, education planning, urbanization, migration and inequalities.

38. Additional opportunities will emerge through major regional review processes scheduled in 2026 and later. These include regional reviews of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and related regional frameworks in 2028; the Fifth Review and Appraisal of the MIPAA between 2026 and 2028; the Third Regional Review of the GCM between 2027 and 2029; the review of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2029 and the Declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development in 2030. These processes provide important opportunities to strengthen awareness of demographic trends and their policy implications, promote the Common Messages, identify priorities that reflect regional demographic realities and provide opportunities for regional cooperation on demographic issues. In turn, findings and regional evidence from these reviews can inform the implementation of the Common Approach.

ii. Upward, elevating regional insights, priorities and innovations into global processes

39. Regional mechanisms also play a critical upward function by ensuring that regional experiences, emerging trends, policy innovations and lessons learned inform global policymaking and intergovernmental deliberations. As regions face distinct demographic transitions, their experiences provide valuable evidence for shaping global responses.

40. Regional forums and review processes generate a rich body of analysis, recommendations and good practices that can feed directly into the global processes listed in paragraphs 37 and 38. Outcomes from regional sustainable development forums contribute to annual sessions of the HLPF, while findings from the Fifth Review and

Appraisal of the MIPAA at the regional level will inform deliberations at the sixty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development in 2028. Similarly, regional reviews of implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action will help shape discussions at the sixty-second session of the Commission on Population and Development in 2029, while outcomes of the Third Regional Review of the GCM will provide substantive inputs to the Third International Migration Review Forum in 2030.

41. Regional entities can further support global processes through the systematic transmission of regional perspectives to UN reports and other global reporting mechanisms. This includes contributions to reports on issues directly affected by demographic change. By elevating evidence from diverse regional contexts, these mechanisms help ensure that global discussions reflect the varied demographic realities, priorities and policy responses emerging across different regions of the world.

iii. Supporting countries and local actors in adapting demographic analysis to their contexts

42. Regional mechanisms are also important vehicles for supporting countries and local actors in applying demographic evidence to policy development and implementation. Through their proximity to national contexts and understanding of regional (and subregional) trends, they can help translate global and regional priorities into practical support tailored to country circumstances.

43. Relevant UN system entities with regional mandates, in collaboration with the UN Development Coordination Office, can contribute regional inputs to inform CCAs and UNSDCFs. Drawing on the Common Messages and regional demographic analysis, these contributions can support the systematic integration of demographic opportunities and challenges in country programming, strategic planning and policy dialogue through Resident Coordinator system channels.

44. Regional coordination platforms also offer important mechanisms for mainstreaming demographic considerations across the UN system. Regional Collaborative Platforms, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General with Vice-Chairs from the regional commissions and UNDP and their Issue-Based Coalitions are encouraged to facilitate joint analysis, coordinated policy messages and shared learning on demographic change. These mechanisms can help strengthen coherence across sectors and promote integrated responses to issues such as ageing, youth transitions, migration, social protection, health, care, education, urban development, labour markets and digital transformation.

45. In addition, regional commissions, UNFPA regional offices and other UN system entities working on these issues at the regional level can provide technical assistance to governments and other stakeholders on the implications of demographic change for public policies. This includes support for the application of analytical tools and methodologies such as National Transfer Accounts, National Time Transfer Accounts and National Inclusion Accounts to better understand the economic and social implications of changing population structures. Regional institutions can also support countries in aligning national policies, action plans and demographic strategies with relevant subregional and regional policy frameworks, facilitating peer learning and promoting the exchange of innovative policy responses across countries facing similar demographic transitions.

46. Drawing on these complementary functions, regional mechanisms can help ensure that demographic perspectives are consistently reflected across global, regional, national and local processes, strengthening coherence within the UN system and enhancing support to Member States in navigating demographic change.

iv. Subregional and multi-country configurations

47. Neighbouring countries may face similar demographic situations, which provides opportunities for shared analysis and common policy responses. Subregional configurations

therefore offer an entry point between region-wide platforms and country-by-country programming. In some subregions this is already reflected in UN planning instruments, for example the multi-country Cooperation Frameworks in the Caribbean and the Pacific, which provide a ready vehicle for shared demographic analysis. In others, coordinated support emerges through subregional integration or cooperation agendas, through Resident Coordinators responding to common demand across neighbouring countries, or through subregional strategies of the UN system. Where these subregional configurations exist, regional commissions can support neighbouring countries in elevating the subregional experience to the regional level, such as in Asia and the Pacific and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Working at this level allows analytical tools and policy lessons to be developed once and adapted across countries facing comparable transitions.

C. Country- and local-level entry points

48. While global and regional initiatives provide normative guidance and analytical frameworks, national and subnational settings are where population dynamics—including changing age structures, fertility trends, urbanization, and internal and international migration—directly impact development outcomes. Mindful that the Common Approach is intended to inform and support existing processes, this section outlines how the UN system aims to work closer together to jointly deliver comprehensive, strategic, evidence-based, and impact-oriented support at the country and local levels, leveraging existing structures and mandates, and help governments transform demographic challenges into sustainable development opportunities.

i. The Resident Coordinator system

49. The Resident Coordinator system plays a key role in operationalizing the Common Approach across country activities. At the political and policy level, RCOs can utilize their convening power with host governments to position demographic change as a critical development driver that intersects with development planning, fiscal sustainability, environmental protection, social cohesion, and human rights. Furthermore, RCOs lead joint resource mobilization strategies, building partnerships with IFIs, regional development banks, and bilateral donors to ensure that national frameworks targeting demographic change are backed by sustainable financing. At the programmatic level, RCOs can facilitate coordination of multi-sectoral technical assistance from both resident and non-resident UN entities. Country requests for support on demographic issues channelled through UNFPA or other resident entities and requiring multi-sectoral technical expertise extending beyond the mandate of single entities can be addressed in coordination with RCOs and UN Country Teams. Specialized UN entities without a physical in-country presence could, where appropriate and at their request, be formally integrated into the country model through the RC system to provide targeted expertise on demand, in line with their respective mandates and the guidance of their governing bodies. Similarly, country demands for specific areas of technical support routed to the UN DESA or the regional commissions (e.g. for census implementation support, policy development or the development of population estimates and projections) can also be aligned with the on-the-ground implementation through the RCOs to ensure complementarity of interventions.

ii. Grounding demographic analysis in UN planning frameworks

50. To ensure that long-term sustainable development pathways are responsive to demographic changes, population dynamics and their impact on sustainable development must be systematically embedded into core UN planning processes. The CCA serves as the essential diagnostic and forward-looking starting point. Rather than presenting population characteristics as static baseline statistics, CCAs should integrate dynamic, predictive demographic intelligence that analyses how patterns of population growth or decline, altering age structures, and fertility, mortality, morbidity and migration trends interact with a country's development, peace, and humanitarian contexts, with consideration of

implications for gender and socio-economic inequalities, access to services, and human rights. This rigorous diagnostic foundation feeds directly into strategic positioning, theory of change, result areas, and targeting mechanisms of the UNSDCF, ensuring that multi-year strategic outcomes are demographically informed from inception to review. Examples of instruments that have been used in many countries to promote a better understanding of the implications of demographic change, including assessment models developed by UN entities, may be found in the annex.

iii. Mechanisms for system alignment and coordinated implementation

51. The operational execution of the Cooperation Frameworks depends heavily on the alignment and coordination of programme interventions and the mobilization of technical capacities across the system. Under the guidance of the Resident Coordinator, UN Country Teams (UNCTs) play a key coordination role. For the implementation of the Common Approach UNCT member entities are urged to review the alignment of individual CPDs with the demographic realities established in the CCAs/UNSDCFs and strengthen this alignment as needed. This alignment minimizes institutional duplication and closes programmatic gaps, creating cross-agency technical synergies for entity-specific mandates.

52. To put these inter-agency linkages into practice, UNCTs can establish dedicated joint initiatives and/or leverage existing regional/global support structures. While no one-size-fits-all approach can be easily identified that would serve equally well the variety of national contexts where the UN operates, some examples of these initiatives include:

- **Joint policy advisory initiatives**: Where appropriate and in response to national priorities, UNCTs may facilitate collaboration among entities with relevant expertise composed of demographers, labour market and pension economists, healthy-ageing and care economy specialists etc. to provide technical support to government ministries. When UNCTs lack comprehensive in-country technical expertise on specific demographic issues, regional or global technical support mechanisms may be accessed. In some cases, these mechanisms are already well established and accessible; in other cases, further development or coordination may be needed, as recognized in proposed reform initiatives under UN80, particularly work package 7 on joint knowledge hubs and work package 8 on expertise on demand.

- **Joint programmes**: UNCTs may operationalize linkages across entities' mandates through thematic joint programmes pooling technical and financial resources across agencies to support national flagship programmes to address demographic change. Programmes to establish sustainable social protection floors in ageing societies or expanding youth education and employment systems to harness the demographic dividend are examples of programmes requiring multi-sectoral interventions.

iv. Key areas of coordinated country-level support

a. Data system strengthening

53. An important area of the UN country-level delivery is the support provided to population data systems. In many low- and middle-income countries, the UN provides technical and operational assistance to national statistical offices (NSOs) to enhance the frequency, reliability and granularity of primary demographic collections, including population and housing censuses, household survey programmes such as the Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, administrative data (civil registration and vital statistics, health management information systems, national digital identity management), geospatial information systems and other sources of digital data, as well as for the production of national and subnational population estimates and projections. This is typically delivered by multiple agencies supporting different initiatives and government entities at different stages of the data value chain. The sustainability of this model may be affected by constraints in domestic and international resources, competing priorities and declining public trust. Greater coordination towards a more integrated

population data ecosystem with streamlined support across the UN system would help address data gaps, improve the cost-effectiveness of data generation, enhance the sustainability and country ownership of national data, and bridge the humanitarian and development data divide. Furthermore, to help countries better understand the implications of demographic change and translate demographic intelligence into informed policy responses, system-wide efforts can be deployed to support the development of key data and analytical products (e.g. census thematic and sectoral reports), train NSOs and other government staff, as well as strengthen domestic analytical capacity of national academic institutions, domestic think tanks, and population research centres.

54. While population data provides the essential demographic baseline, it is only one part of the evidence base needed to understand the impact of demographic change. A fuller picture requires linking population to sectoral quantitative data, including thematic household surveys (e.g. income and expenditure, labour force and time-use surveys), administrative data (e.g. education and health management information systems), and remote sensing (e.g. building footprints). Across sources, data should be disaggregated by sex and age, including at older ages—as age caps in many collection systems obscure diversity within older populations and, in particular, the situation of older women—as well as by other relevant characteristics. Ad hoc surveys, citizen-generated and qualitative data can also capture attitudes, perceptions and experiences related to demographic trends—such as fertility preferences, migration intentions and experiences of ageism, care burdens or exclusion—that official statistics typically do not reveal. Strengthening the UN system's support to countries should therefore extend beyond core demographic statistics to this wider ecosystem of quantitative and qualitative data across sectors.[19]

b. Upstream policy support

55. An important function of the UN system’s country-level engagement is the provision of upstream policy advice for the preparation of national strategies that set out the national vision for future developments in the country, and provide the framework to guide the formulation of development plans and the equitable allocation of resources. Given their long-term horizon, national development strategies represent a suitable instrument to promote the incorporation of demographic considerations into national governance architectures. Some countries formulate dedicated policy instruments to address their demographic futures, e.g. national population policies. UN entities can assist in embedding demographic perspectives (including long-term population projections and demographic foresight) into national and sectoral strategies, and translating high-level visions into actionable policies and planning.

56. In tandem with Ministries of Finance and Planning, the UN system can support the use of demographic intelligence to inform equitable and sustainable resource allocation. This involves anticipating changing demand and supporting balanced investments in education, universal health coverage, social pensions, and long-term care and support systems, lifelong learning and other public services across the life course. Engagement with line ministries (labour, health, education, local development, housing, and social affairs) can help ensure that sectoral planning addresses shifting labour supply patterns, changing health needs, adult upskilling or reskilling needs, and internal and international migration patterns. Where present, National Population Commissions or Councils can receive targeted support from UNFPA and other UN system entities with relevant mandates to execute their nationally determined functions such as cross-ministerial policy coordination, public advocacy on population issues, and the oversight of the national implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

[19] In recognition of the need for integrated and interoperable social demographic statistics across sectors, the UN Statistical Commission established the Committee of Experts on Population and Social Statistics (CEPSS) in 2026, to review existing practices and provide guidance on how to modernize social and demographic statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond 2030.

c. National legislation and rights protection

57. Ensuring demographic policy adheres to international human rights obligations and standards, as well as to internationally agreed legal and development frameworks requires a supportive national legal and policy environment. The UN system offers targeted technical support and advocacy to Parliamentarians, Legislative Committees and other national authorities. This technical assistance can support the review and development of rights-based laws and policies that protect individuals from age- and gender-based discrimination in employment, asset ownership, and public life, among others. The UN can also support the review of labour codes and related policies in anticipation of or adaptation to demographic changes, including flexible working and retirement arrangements, parental leave protections, removing structural barriers to women's labour market participation and expanding and adapting social protection and developing adequate care and support systems. Legislative and policy advisory support can also help safeguard bodily autonomy and reproductive choices, enabling individuals to realize their reproductive intentions across the life course. UNCTs can also support States reporting to international human rights processes, providing relevant demographic information, strengthening national capacity to engage with treaty bodies and facilitating civil society inputs.

d. SDG monitoring

58. Tracking the progress of the 2030 Agenda amid shifting population profiles requires demographically sensitive monitoring. The UN system provides support to national reporting bodies for the preparation of VNRs submitted to the HLPF. Greater efforts can be made to ensure that VNR inputs demonstrate how demographic changes function as structural accelerators or barriers across specific SDGs, such as poverty eradication (SDG 1), health outcomes (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work (SDG 8) and reducing inequalities (SDG 10). Closer coordination across UN entities providing such support is very important. Crucially, the UN facilitates representation and engagement of key population groups in the VNR process, ensuring that the voices of youth networks, older persons' associations, Indigenous Peoples, and migrant groups are represented in accountability reviews.

v. Localization and local-level engagement

59. Demographic change is ultimately experienced at the local level, where the effects of population ageing, internal and international migration, urbanization, depopulation of rural areas, changing household structures and climate-related displacement manifest differently across territories, cities and communities. Local authorities are often the first institutions required to adapt services, infrastructure, housing, health and care systems, transportation, education and labour market programmes to changing population structures. Since demographic transitions are highly place-specific, responses should be grounded in integrated territorial planning that recognizes the diversity of cities, towns and rural communities and supports context-specific, evidence-based solutions. Strengthening local capacities to anticipate and respond to demographic change can therefore support more effective implementation of national policies, while advancing the SDGs.[20]

a. Strengthening local demographic intelligence and population data systems

60. The UN system can support local authorities and local stakeholders by improving access to reliable and disaggregated demographic data, including subnational population estimates and projections by degree of urbanization, small-area statistics, geospatial analysis

[20] A localized approach is also consistent with the principles of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), which emphasizes the creation of enabling and supportive environments and the mainstreaming of ageing into development policies, while recognizing the importance of implementation at national and local levels. It also directly supports the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), of which the action area on age-friendly environments calls for communities to foster the abilities of older persons and enable participation, inclusion and healthy ageing throughout the life course.

and foresight tools. This includes strengthening local demographic intelligence through the integration of statistical, geospatial, administrative and community-generated data, as well as supporting local urban observatories and other territorial data systems that enable evidence-based planning and decision-making. This information is essential for planning infrastructure, housing, transport systems, education and health services, long-term care, social protection and local economic development. Particular attention should be given to identifying territorial inequalities, anticipating changing service needs and mapping populations in situations of heightened vulnerability, including Indigenous Peoples, migrants, persons with disabilities, older persons living alone, and remote rural communities. Local demographic intelligence can also strengthen disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation and preparedness efforts by identifying areas where demographic vulnerabilities intersect with environmental risks.

b. Tailoring responses to local demographic dynamics

61. Support to municipalities and local governments should encompass a wide range of responses tailored to different demographic realities. In rapidly growing and urbanizing areas, this may include expanding access to affordable housing, quality learning opportunities and other basic services; strengthening land-use planning; and promoting social connection and cohesion in contexts of high mobility and migration. In rural areas experiencing population decline, outmigration and population ageing, support may focus on maintaining service delivery, enhancing lifelong learning opportunities, strengthening local economies, fostering universal and meaningful connectivity, digital inclusion, and digital skills, supporting age-friendly housing and transportation, and facilitating the continued social, civic and economic participation of older persons. Across all contexts, integrated territorial planning should promote the meaningful engagement of community dwellers and be accompanied by sustained investments in local institutional capacity, financing and technical assistance, recognizing that local governments require adequate resources to respond effectively to demographic transitions.

c. Leveraging UN platforms and local government networks

62. Concrete examples of successful localization of action for demographic change led by the UN system already exist[21] and need to be further leveraged. The localization of the SDGs also provides valuable lessons for implementing the Common Approach. [22] Engagement with global and national associations of local governments and regional municipal networks[23] can further strengthen peer learning, technical cooperation and the scaling up of successful local responses to demographic change. Importantly, local evidence, innovations, and lessons learned through UN platforms and government networks can inform national, regional and global policy discussions, reinforcing a two-way connection between localization and international processes through effective multilevel governance feedback mechanisms.

VI. Key actions for implementation

63. To translate the Common Approach into tangible outcomes, this section details key actions and deliverables for enhancing UN system coherence, which respond directly to Member State priorities, leverage existing structures and align with UN80 reform efforts. It comprises time-bound initiatives that will be conducted by the Task Team in the last phase of its operations (November 2026 to April 2027) to enhance the roll-out of the Common

[21] These include, for example, the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities and the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities.

[22] The UN Local2030 Coalition serves as the principal UN system platform for accelerating SDG localization by strengthening collaboration among national governments, local and regional authorities, civil society, academia, the private sector and communities. The growing use of Voluntary Local Reviews illustrates how city and local governments can monitor progress, strengthen accountability and integrate demographic trends into local implementation of the SDGs.

[23] Examples include United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability.

Approach, as well as higher-level strategic recommendations for the UN system to pursue the Common Approach's long-term objectives.

64. All actions under the Common Approach should be implemented in accordance with international human rights standards and apply gender-responsive, age-sensitive and intersectional approaches, including through meaningful participation and the use of appropriately disaggregated data.

1. Strategic positioning and communication

a) **Communication and advocacy tools:** The Task Team will develop and deliver a professionally designed communication package and advocacy toolkit to promote system-wide uptake of the Common Messages, support senior leadership decision-making, enhance internal ownership across UN personnel beyond population-experts, and elevate the UN's position as a global thought leader. *(Task Team deliverable)*

b) **Joint SDG Summit issue brief:** The Task Team will prepare an inter-agency issue brief examining the interaction between demographic change and the SDGs, drawing on the Common Messages and Common Approach to inform preparations for the 2027 SDG Summit. *(Task Team deliverable)*

c) **Mainstreaming of demographic change:** UN entities will promote a common understanding of the links between demographic change and sustainable development, and the integration of demographic change into their strategic plans, results frameworks, and contributions to global and regional intergovernmental frameworks and processes, including platforms looking beyond 2030.

2. Data ecosystems and foresight

a) **Integration of population projections and strategic foresight:** UN entities and UNCTs are encouraged to systematically incorporate population projections, demographic scenario modelling and strategic foresight methodologies into diagnostic tools and planning frameworks to better anticipate long-term demographic change and structural shifts, manage emerging risks, and transition national planning from reactive measures to proactive adaptation.

b) **UN data leadership**: UN DESA, UNFPA, the regional commissions and other UN system entities producing global and regional population data and hosting population databases will continue to promote the availability, accessibility and utilization of core demographic data repositories for system-wide analyses, while expanding efforts to improve population data literacy across the system.

c) **Strengthening population data systems:** UN entities, under the leadership of UNFPA, UN DESA, the regional commissions, and agencies with specialized data mandates, will strengthen national data systems by promoting the integration of censuses, surveys, administrative registers, geospatial and other non-traditional data sources, enhancing the availability of disaggregated data by sex and age, including at older ages, and by other relevant characteristics where appropriate and consistent with human rights and data-protection standards, and strengthening national capacities to use population data for demographic analysis.

d) **Localized demographic intelligence and territorial planning:** UN entities will support municipal and local authorities in strengthening small-area statistics, local urban observatories, and territorial data systems to adapt local infrastructure, housing, education, health and care services to place-specific demographic dynamics (e.g. rapid urbanization, rural depopulation).

3. Inter-agency synergies, regional coordination and institutional readiness

a) **Enhancing inter-agency joint engagement:** Inter-agency mechanisms are encouraged to identify opportunities to pursue joint engagement – including at key global and regional convenings and through joint analytical and policy work and coordinated advocacy on the cross-cutting principles of the Common Messages.

b) **Leveraging regional platforms and structures:** Regional Collaborative Platforms and Issue-Based Coalitions are encouraged to draw on informal regional working groups on demographic change, ageing and migration, to name a few, to exchange good practices and designate lead entities to drive inter-agency collaboration across regions.

c) **Alignment with UN80 reform workstreams:** UN entities will align support on demographic change with evolving UN80 reform workstreams, including by exploring opportunities for leveraging new mechanisms to deliver agile, cross-agency technical expertise to Member States.

4. Upstream policy advice, country programming and integrated support

a) **Targeted country-level pilots:** UNFPA and interested partners will lead an effort to pilot the implementation of the Common Approach in selected countries in close coordination with RCOs, UNCTs and regional mechanisms, testing diagnostic tools, facilitating multi-stakeholder policy dialogues, and leveraging coordinated cross-level technical support. Lessons learned may be reported to the HLCP to inform system-wide scaling. (*Task Team deliverable, pending confirmation of pilot countries*)

b) **Demographically informed SDG monitoring and VNR support:** UN system entities will deliver coordinated assistance to national reporting bodies to reflect demographic dynamics within VNRs and other SDG tracking mechanisms, while facilitating the meaningful participation of affected populations and their representative organizations, including women's organizations, youth, older persons, migrants, and other marginalized populations.

c) **Joint policy advice and programme delivery:** UNCTs, under the leadership of Resident Coordinators, are encouraged to mobilize coordinated support to Member States in embedding long-term demographic intelligence and foresight into national development strategies, national budgets, population policies, service delivery and rights-based legislative frameworks, including through joint policy advisory initiatives, cross-sectoral technical assistance, joint programme implementation, and South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

d) **CCA and UNSDCF operational guidance:** Bearing in mind discussions in the UNSDG working group on Programme Development and Results and relevant work packages under the UN80 Initiative, the Task Team will assess possible mechanisms to support RCOs and UNCTs in embedding demographic considerations into CCAs and UNSDCFs, including through tools such as demographic projections, care economy analytics, healthy ageing assessments, and gender-responsive and rights-based diagnostics.

ANNEX

Examples of key analytical tools for the CCAs, and applications to the UNSDCF

To transition from descriptive assessments to forward-looking intelligence, CCAs can rely upon a range of diagnostic and predictive technical instruments. This annex provides some examples of instruments that have been used in many countries to promote a better understanding of the implications of demographic change.

- **National and subnational population estimates and projections**, which provide the bedrock for understanding population dynamics and changes by age, sex, and geographic location, informing the formulation of high-level strategic priorities for the UNSDCFs, and anticipating changes in future service demand, school-age cohorts, working-age labour entries and exits, older dependent populations, etc.

- **Population Situation Analyses (PSAs)**, featuring more in-depth analysis of the interaction between demographic change and a broad range of sectors, and providing relevant insights for ministries of planning and finance as well as line ministries responsible for health, education, gender equality and the environment, among others.

- **Rights-based policy assessments,** evaluating legal, institutional, and policy frameworks to identify structural age- and gender-based discrimination, as well as barriers to reproductive autonomy, and forming the baseline for the UNSDCF to incorporate targeted actions to protect rights and advance non-discrimination across the life course.

- **National Transfer Accounts (NTAs),** which provide in-depth analytics of the links between demographic change and the economy, revealing patterns of economic dependency, public and private transfers, fiscal pressures, and the realization of demographic dividends. Together with complementary frameworks, such as National Time Transfer Accounts (NTTAs) and National Inclusion Accounts (NTA-Is), they shed light on women's contribution to the formal and informal economy, including the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, thereby strengthening the policy case for gender-responsive fiscal and labour market reforms.

- **Labour market assessments**, **labour market information systems (LMIS) and ILO modelled estimates**, drawing on Labour Force Surveys and administrative records to track employment, unemployment, and informality rates by age, sex and sector — complementing NTAs by capturing whether the working-age population created by the demographic transition is actually being absorbed into productive, decent employment. **School-to-Work Transition Surveys** further illuminate how effectively young people are moving from education into the labour market, a critical indicator for countries seeking to realize the demographic dividend.

- **ILO estimates on the care economy**, drawing on time-use data and the ILO's statistical standard setting process on the topic of statistical definitions of care work, to appropriately measure unpaid care work, paid care work and to inform investment in the care workforce.

- **Healthy ageing and health system readiness assessments**, drawing on demographic projections, epidemiological trends, health service utilization data, health workforce statistics and measures of functional ability to assess the capacity of health and care systems to respond to changing population structures. These assessments can identify future needs for health promotion, disease prevention, preparedness and public health surveillance, primary healthcare, integrated care, rehabilitation, mental health services, long-term care and the health and care workforce. They can also examine the wider determinants of health, including housing, education, employment, income security, social connectedness, environmental conditions, transport and access to age-friendly communities, helping to identify inequalities across age, sex, geography and socioeconomic status. By linking

demographic change to both population health outcomes and their underlying social, economic and environmental drivers, these assessments can inform policies and investments that strengthen public health functions, advance healthy ageing, support universal health coverage and improve health and well-being across the life course.

- **Sectoral assessments** particularly relevant to the national context, e.g. ageing diagnostics to evaluate the structural readiness of healthcare, social safety nets, and fiscal pension systems; and care economy assessments to quantify, value, and formalize the unpaid care infrastructure.

- **Strengthened data systems for identifying populations in situations of heightened vulnerability**, integrating granular, georeferenced population data with other geospatial information to map population distribution alongside infrastructure, services and exposure to risk. This supports disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness through the availability of disaggregated demographic information needed for risk assessments, early warning systems, evacuation planning, humanitarian response and post-disaster recovery. It also strengthens the risk mitigation capability of UNSDCFs, supporting anticipatory action, leaving no one behind, and enhancing programmatic integration across the humanitarian, development, and peace continuum.

- **Digital inclusion and technology-adaptation indicators**, drawing on ITU digital-development indicators, including indicators related to universal and meaningful connectivity, affordability, internet access and use, complemented where relevant by digital skills and OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) automation-risk measures, and ILO digital-skills-gap indicators, disaggregated by age, sex, disability status, location, and other relevant demographic characteristics to identify disparities in the ability of different population groups to benefit from digital transformation and to analyse the needs and impact of technology across different demographic realities.

- **Strategic foresight**, using population projections in combination with systems thinking and foresight methodologies to deal with uncertainty in examining the interactions between population dynamics and other megatrends. This approach helps map possible and probable future scenarios and identify key risks, preferred trajectories and corresponding policy options for integration into policies and programmes, helping governments prepare for their demographic futures rather than merely react to them.