



Ladies and gentlemen,

There is no doubt that both unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and the rapid growth of the human population have contributed to environmental degradation, climate change, deforestation and loss of biodiversity

Yet, the relationship between population growth and sustainable development is often misunderstood.

Certainly rapid population growth poses challenges to economic and social progress it makes eradicating poverty, combatting hunger and malnutrition, and increasing the coverage of health and education systems more difficult.

At the same time ~~and this is perhaps less evident~~ achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those related to health, education and gender equality, will contribute towards slowing the growth of the world's population. Expanded opportunities for education and employment contribute to a decline of fertility by changing incentives and intentions around marriage and childbearing by promoting individual autonomy and decision making, especially for women and girls

Access to reproductive health care and fulfillment of reproductive rights ensure that women and couples are ad68 0 Tdl.3u3 (d)-7 (u)11.8 (i056 0 Td [(.)-4 11.8 (d)8.6 (ua)1e0.6 (

While it is true that lower population growth, if maintained over several decades, will help to mitigate environmental degradation, too often population growth is conflated with environmental problems, including the increased concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the resulting changes in the climate. This perspective ignores the fact that countries with the highest levels of consumption and emissions today are those where population growth is slow or even negative.

Meanwhile, the majority of the world's growth is concentrated and in the coming years will increasingly be concentrated in the world's poorest countries. These countries, which have significantly lower emissions rates, are likely to suffer disproportionately from the effects of climate change, in part because they lack the resources needed to adapt to these changes and to mitigate their impacts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In order to usher in a world in which all 8 billion people can thrive, we need a rapid decoupling of economic activity from the current overreliance on fossil fuel energy, as well as greater efficiency in the use of such resources. Wealthier countries and the international community should help to ensure that poorer countries receive the necessary assistance, both technical and financial, so that their economies can grow using technologies that will minimize future greenhouse gas emissions.

More broadly, we need to double our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, through policies and programmes that make our world more inclusive, more equitable and more sustainable.

While some countries face the challenges of high fertility and rapid population growth, others are now facing another set of issues related to low fertility, rapid population ageing and potentially population decline. China, a country that was very successful in lowering its birth rate and slowing the growth of its population, is now experiencing very low levels of fertility.

Recently, China's population began to decline in size, and we expect this trend will continue. In 2050, the UN projections anticipate a Chinese population that is 1 (j)4.611.8 (o)



