a broad range of themes including peace and security, sustainable development, dimate

While progress in improving health outcomes continues globally, regional disparities remain stark. People in low-income countries continue to have substantially lower life expectancy than people in high-income countries. Children born in sub-Saharan Africa face higher obstacles to celebrating their first or fifth birthdays than children nearly anywhere else in the world. Conflicts and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic have slowed progress in achieving the various health-related goals and targets.

Ongoing demographic trends bring opportunities but also challenges to the efforts to ensure health for all at all ages. In countries with growing populations, the availability of healthcare services, including for sexual and reproductive health, is often limited. Countries that are experiencing population decline with rapid population ageing, have to plan for the healthcare needs of their increasingly older populations.

## Dear colleagues,

Today, we will have a chance to learn from the experts of the UN system on the substantive theme of the annual session. I am eager to hear the presentations by the panelists. After that, I very much look forward to a fruitful dialogue with our experts.