



## Side Event on the margins of the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development

### Demographic Shifts, Digital Futures, and Sustainable Development: Realizing the Ageing Dividend

Wednesday 15 April 2026  
1:15pm – 2:30pm, Conference Room 8, UN Headquarters

---

#### Background

The special theme of the 59th session of the Commission on Population and Development, taking place in April 2026, is “Population, technology and research in the context of sustainable development”, as profound changes in the technological landscape have taken place since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994.

Global demographic trends are undergoing profound and irreversible transformation. Increased longevity, combined with declining fertility rates, is reshaping population age structures across regions, with profound implications for economic growth, labor markets, health systems, social protection and intergenerational solidarity.

Population ageing is emerging as a defining global demographic trend, including in the Arab region and in many countries traditionally characterized as youthful societies. Rapid improvements in life expectancy, declining fertility rates, and changing family structures are accelerating these demographic transitions. Several countries are witnessing expanded working-age populations alongside a steadily growing proportion of older persons. These transitions underscore the urgent need for integrated population policies that promote healthy ageing, social inclusion, and economic

participation of older persons, supported by early, forward-looking, and evidence-based policy responses.

This demographic transition presents both challenges and opportunities. Ageing has often been viewed primarily through a social protection and healthcare lens, sometimes framed as a fiscal burden. However, global and regional evidence increasingly highlights the broader development and economic contributions of older persons. Economic activities linked to the needs, capacities and engagement of older persons, create opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship, employment generation, and productivity growth across sectors such as health and care services, digital solutions, smart housing, financial services, lifelong learning, mobility and leisure.

Technological advancements — particularly in data analytics, demographic modelling, and future scenarios planning — are strengthening demographic foresight and enabling more resilient, adaptive policymaking. These tools provide governments with opportunities to develop anticipatory policies, estimate investment needs, and design technology-enabled programs across key sectors. Innovations in healthcare delivery, digital health systems, artificial intelligence, assistive technologies, and integrated population data systems support adaptation to emerging demographic realities, improve quality of life for older persons, expand equitable access to services, and reinforce social protection frameworks.

In recognition of these realities, countries of the Arab region are advancing policies and national strategies that integrate population dynamics, aging, and digital transformation into broader sustainable development frameworks.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab Republic of Egypt have made notable strides in incorporating ageing considerations into their national development agendas, digital transformation strategies, health sector reforms, and innovation ecosystems. Saudi Arabia is pioneering the field of ageing through a forward-looking, integrated approach that aligns health, social, and economic policies. By embedding ageing priorities within the **Saudi Vision 2030**, the Kingdom is advancing coordinated strategies that promote prevention, active living, and inclusive participation across the life course. Its efforts span enhanced healthcare services, strengthened social protection systems, and expanded opportunities for older adults to contribute economic dividends.

Similarly, **Egypt Vision 2030** and the National Population Strategy adopt a life-cycle approach, recognizing that investments in early childhood — particularly during the first 1,000 days — lay the foundation for lifelong health, productivity, and well-being. This Lifespan culminates in policies that support healthy, active ageing.

Aligned with the thematic focus of the 59th Session of the CPD, and based on Resolution No. (2) issued by the Arab Council for Population and Development in its seventh session held in December 2026 in Baghdad regarding participation in CPD 59, the League of Arab States, in

cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and Planning of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Health and Population of the Arab Republic of Egypt (National Population Council), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), are organizing this side event to provide an important platform to share national experiences, highlight diverse regional perspectives, and reflect shared global priorities aimed at advancing innovative, evidence-based population policies grounded in a life-course approach to sustainable development, with particular attention to healthy and dignified ageing.

## **Objectives**

The main objectives of the planned side event are:

1. To provide a regional platform for policy dialogue, knowledge exchange, and coordination on population and development issues, including ageing and silver Economy, to foster international dialogue and partnerships on ageing within the ICPD framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. To showcase a holistic life-cycle approach to population and development by linking early-life investments, and youth health and wellbeing, reproductive health and women's health to healthy ageing outcomes and sustained productivity across the lifespan, demonstrating how technology and research can support sustainable development across generations.
3. To highlight demographic ageing as a major structural transition within national population strategies requiring integrated and forward-looking policy responses.
4. To share best practices from Arab countries and lessons learned from countries in other regional groups regarding innovative uses of technology and research in demographic forecasting, future scenario modelling, and the promotion of healthy and active ageing through anticipatory policies and programs.
5. To discuss policies that ensure dignity, inclusion, economic participation, and adequate social protection for older persons.
6. To address digital divides and inequalities affecting older persons' access to services and technologies.

The event will be held in Arabic and English, with simultaneous interpretation available. It will consist of opening remarks, expert presentations, a moderated plenary discussion, and closing remarks.

<p><b>Welcoming Remarks</b></p> <p>Time: 1:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Abla El Alfy, Deputy Minister of Health and Population, Chair of the National Population Council, Egypt</li> <li>• H.E. Dr. Abdulaziz Alwasil, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations</li> <li>• H.E. Dr. Maged Abdelaziz, Permanent Representative of the League of Arab States to the United Nations</li> <li>• Mr. Pio Smith, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UNFPA</li> </ul>
<p><b>Panel Presentations</b></p> <p>Time: 1:30 p.m. – 2:25 p.m.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Mansour Al-Rumayyan, Deputy Minister of Population Policies and Human Capital Development, Ministry of Economy and Planning, Saudi Arabia</li> <li>• Prof. Abla El Alfy, Deputy Minister of Health and Population, Chair of the National Population Council, Egypt</li> <li>• Dr. Reiko Hayashi, Director General, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPSS), Japan</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A:</b> Moderated by Minister Plenipotentiary Chouaa Dassouki, Director of Population Policies Department, League of Arab States.</p>
<p><b>Closing remarks</b></p> <p>Time: 2:25 – 2:30</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Charles Katoanga, Director of the Division for Inclusive Social Development, DESA</li> </ul>