



These fundamental changes in the population age structure are directly related to a number of Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, especially in the areas of health, education, gender equality, productive employment and decent work, poverty eradication and social protection, among others. Because of their interaction with the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development, demographic trends and policy responses to those trends will affect the ability of countries and of the world to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Conversely, progress in meeting the Goals and targets in some key sectors, such as education and health, will influence demographic trends, including for fertility, which is the primary driver of changes in the population age distribution.

An important feature of the 2030 Agenda is the pledge by Member States that no one will be left behind. Keeping this pledge will require that governments and other actors give priority to addressing the situations of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Some members of society are vulnerable and require protection and assistance by virtue of their age, in particular children, youth and older persons. Adapting the social protection system to fundamental changes in the size of different age groups, in a manner that ensures the financial sustainability of that system over the long term, is one of the major challenges faced by countries as a consequence of the demographic transition.

As you will see in more detail in the presentation that will follow the introductory remarks from myself and Jorge Bravo, the age structure has evolved significantly since half a century ago, when more than half of the population consisted of children and youth under the age of 25 years, and when older persons aged 60 years or above represented less than 6 per cent of the global population.

parts of the world. As a result, the social and economic consequences of changing population age structures also vary greatly across countries and regions. This meeting will consider a range of situations and experiences, including for countries and regions where the demographic transition started only recently and the challenges pertain to a large and growing population of children and youth, as well as for other parts of the world where fertility has been below the replacement level for decades and the gradual ageing of the population presents an entirely different set of challenges.

I look forward to hearing your presentations and the ensuing discussions on the various topics being considered in this meeting. I appreciate the richness that you will bring to these discussions by highlighting the situations and experiences of countries and regions where you have a particular expertise. All of these elements will be taken into consideration when preparing the report of the Secretary-General on changing population age structures and sustainable development, which will inform the discussion of these topics by Member States and other stakeholders during the next session of the Commission on Population and Development in April of 2017.

I hope that you will find the meeting informative and stimulating, and that you will enjoy your stay in New York. On behalf of the United Nations and its Member States, I wish to thank you for