

**Statement made by IUSSP Vice-President Laura Rodriguez Wong behalf of IUSSP  
as recipient of the 2025 United Nations Population Award (Institutional Category)  
11 July 2025**

Your Excellency, Ambassador Sidi Mohamed Laghdaf, of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Chair of the Committee for the United Nations Population Award,  
Dr. Natalia Kanem, UNFPA Executive Director and Secretary to the Committee for the United Nations Population Award,  
Distinguished Members of the Committee,  
Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,  
Colleagues and Friends,

It is a great honour, as the incoming President for 2025–2029 of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), to accept the prestigious United Nations Population Award on behalf of the Union and its global membership.

We receive this award as recognition of the contributions that population scientists have made to global demographic understanding over nearly a century—indeed, the Union will celebrate its centenary in just over two years. It is also an encouragement to continue our mission: to promote the scientific study of population, foster exchange among researchers worldwide, and stimulate interest in population issues. In doing so, the IUSSP—aligned with the values of the United Nations—seeks to contribute to peace, dignity, and equality on a healthy planet.

With this brief statement, I would like to offer you an overview of the Union—its origins, achievements, and vision for the future.

**What the IUSSP is**

The IUSSP was founded in 1928, following the first World Population Conference in Geneva in 1927, organized by the League of Nations, which later evolved into the United Nations. From the beginning, the Union has had a strong identification with the UN.

Three years later, the IUSSP created 14 national committees to coordinate population studies. This format was later abandoned, and in 1947 the Union became an association of individual scholars—growing into the world’s largest network of population specialists. This transformation ensured scientific independence and reduced political interference in demographic research.

Since then, the IUSSP has consistently advanced scientific understanding of demographic processes and their implications for development, with a particular emphasis on the Global South.

Today, the Union has around 2,000 members, with an almost equal gender balance. About 30% are students, and 60% of members come from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

## Historical contributions

The IUSSP has played a vital role in shaping modern demographic research. Let me highlight a few examples:

1. **Databases** – In the 1960s, the IUSSP contributed to the development of long-term demographic databases, which became essential for studying population trends. These include the World Fertility Survey (WFS) and the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)—though the latter faces an uncertain future. Recognizing the importance of data, the IUSSP also promotes research and capacity-building to improve civil registration in vulnerable settings. Beyond being a vital data source, civil registration is itself a fundamental human right.
2. **ICPD 1994** – The IUSSP played a key role in the scientific preparations for the landmark International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. The Union ensured that sound demographic evidence informed the policy discussions. The ICPD's strategic themes remain strongly aligned with IUSSP's long-standing research priorities. Together with UNFPA, the Union continues to contribute to the three transformative goals for sexual and reproductive health and rights: zero maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence.
3. **Supporting the SDGs** – Understanding the centrality of population data for the Sustainable Development Goals, the IUSSP has worked to:
  - Strengthen and train researchers in population data collection and use, essential for SDG monitoring;
  - Collaborate with global partners, including ECOSOC and UNFPA;
  - Provide expert knowledge on fertility, migration, mortality, and urbanization to guide policymakers in strategies aligned with the SDGs.

## How the IUSSP works

The Union advances scientific knowledge through a wide range of activities. Our flagship International Population Conference (IPC) is held every four years—we are now gathering in Australia for the 30th IPC.

We also promote the preparation of didactic materials—books, manuals, and research notes—some of which have become classics, like the UN Population Manuals.

Most of this work is carried out through **IUSSP Scientific Panels**, which are small, international, member-driven groups of experts. By unwritten rule, they include members from both the Global North and South. Currently, 16 panels address pressing population issues from a multidisciplinary perspective—ranging from demographic impacts of climate change and conflict to inequality, poverty, and gender. Importantly, we also have a dynamic Early Career Perspectives Panel, to ensure the next generation of scholars is fully engaged.

Through this approach, the IUSSP has built bridges among scientists, stakeholders, and policymakers worldwide. Our multiplier effect goes beyond science alone, shaping social programs and policies that especially benefit the most vulnerable.

### **Current challenges**

Before closing, allow me to briefly mention some of the pressing population challenges—better described as “challenges” rather than “problems”—that weigh on the Union’s agenda: declining fertility, unmet need for family planning and SRHR, population ageing, new patterns of family and kinship, migration and refugee displacement, and the effects of climate change.

Time does not permit me to go into detail, but these are precisely the areas where IUSSP research will continue to make urgent and vital contributions.

### **Closing**

Distinguished participants and delegates, I am pleased to note that since the inception of the UN Population Award, four IUSSP members have received it in the Individual Category. This year’s recognition of the Union in the Institutional Category is a testament to our collective contributions and dedication to:

- advancing understanding of population dynamics,
- strengthening partnerships with governments and international organizations, and
- communicating research findings in clear, accessible ways for all.

We believe this 2025 Population Award will further strengthen the IUSSP’s contributions to sustainable development as we approach our centennial celebrations.

On behalf of the Union, I express our profound gratitude for this timely and meaningful recognition.

Thank you.

Laura Rodriguez Wong (IUSSP vice-President, President-elect for 2026-2029)