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Background of the Conference

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is the third global conference on population issues held under the auspices of the United Nations, but the first to fully integrate population and development issues. In this sense it parallels the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, known popularly as the Rio Earth Summit.

The first population conference was held in Bucharest in 1974 and the second in Mexico City in 1984. The ICPD has built on the recommendations of both those conferences, which are contained in the World Population Plan of Action. But the specificity of the ICPD's new twenty-year Programme of Action, its strong focus on women, its emphasis on social development, and the unprecedented level of participation by non-governmental organizations, set it apart from all previous world meetings dealing with population issues. The ICPD Programme of Action sets no demographic targets, focusing rather on the actions needed to allow all people to make their own choices with regard to childbearing.

Not all countries are expected to implement all of the wide-ranging recommendations. However, if the Programme of Action is widely implemented between now and the year 2015, millions of women's lives will be saved, the needless deaths of tens of millions of children will be prevented, and women world-wide will enter the mainstream of political and economic affairs in their countries. In addition, most countries will be in a position to complete the demographic transition from high to low birth and death rates, bringing an end to population growth problems in the lifetime of children alive today.

The ICPD has occurred at a critical point between the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, the 1995 Social Summit in Copenhagen and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing -- a series of international meetings which together promise to set a new global agenda for socially equitable and environmentally sustainable human development in the aftermath of the Cold War.

Three-Year Preparations

The 170-nation Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) held its first session in New York, in March 1991. This session defined the objectives and themes of the Conference. At the second session of the Preparatory Committee held in New York in May 1993, delegates called for a new, free-standing document to include action-oriented recommendations to address population and development challenges over the next two decades, including a set of quantitative goals in the fields of health, education and family planning. In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly elevated the ICPD to a status comparable to that of UNCED, the Rio Earth Summit.

In preparing this new document -- the ICPD Programme of Action -- the UN Conference Secretariat drew on formal recommendations from five regional population conferences for Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Arab States, a number of subregional preparatory meetings, six expert group meetings on priority issues; and a series of ad hoc round tables on key ICPD themes. Important input also came from national population reports prepared in more than 150 countries and suggestions sent in by several hundred local, national and international non-governmental organizations.

In the third and final session of the Preparatory Committee, held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in April 1994, delegates agreed to a remarkable 90 percent of the draft Programme of Action. In addition to official delegations from 170 countries, an estimated 1,200 representatives from over 500 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including many representing women, had unprecedented access to the negotiation process and were an important influence in shaping the outcome, especially the key recommendations on gender equity, female education, the family, reproductive rights, male responsibility and women's health.

The Conference itself, held September 5 to 13, 1994, in Cairo, was the largest meeting on population and development ever held, attracting over 10,000 participants from 180 countries. Included in this number were some 4,000 representatives from 1,500 non-governmental organizations and over 4,000 journalists. Never before has so much public attention been focused on these important global issues. Never before have so many of the world's people been a part of the debate.

Chapter-by-Chapter Summary

Chapter I, Preamble.

The Preamble sets the context for urgent global action by recognizing that the international community's response -to population and development challenges *over the remainder of this decade* will affect the quality of life for present and all future generations. It highlights the need for greater investments in people, as a prerequisite for socially equitable, environmentally sustainable development and sustained economic growth, and for a new global commitment to make women full partners with men in the social, economic and political lives of their communities.

Chapter II, Principles.

Chapter II sets out 15 Principles that should govern population and related development activities, the wording of which is generally taken or derived from various international declarations, conventions or covenants. The principles focus largely on human rights issues as they relate to population and sustainable development.

Chapter III, Interrelationships between Population, Sustained Economic Growth and Sustainable Development.

The Programme of Action reflects growing world awareness that population factors are inextricably linked to the full range of human development concerns -- including poverty alleviation, women's empowerment and environmental protection. It notes that with current wasteful patterns of consumption and production, widespread poverty and a world population growing at 88 million people a year, many of the resources on which future generations will depend are being depleted rapidly and pollution is intensifying.

Population problems cannot be solved without tackling poverty. Widespread poverty remains the major challenge to development efforts. The Programme of Action states that sustainable development and poverty eradication should be supported by macro-economic policies designed to provide an appropriate economic environment, as well as good governance, effective national policies and efficient national institutions.

The document stresses that efforts to slow population growth, to reduce poverty, to achieve economic progress, to improve environmental protection, and to reduce unsustainable consumption and production are mutually reinforcing.

Chapter IV, Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women.

The Programme of Action recognizes that improvements in women's political, social, economic and health status are highly important and ethically mandated ends in themselves and that they are, in addition, essential for slowing population growth and achieving sustainable development. The need for gender equality is emphasized throughout the Programme of Action. Chapter IV was strengthened considerably during PrepCom III as a result of the active participation of women's representatives.

The Programme of Action highlights education as one of the most important means to ensure self-determination for women and therefore urges countries to ensure the widest and earliest possible access by girls and women not only to primary education, but also to secondary and higher levels of education, as well as vocational education and technical training.

The document notes that while levels of education have risen considerably during the past two decades, an estimated 960 million persons are illiterate, two thirds of them women. Some 130 million children, including over 90 million girls, are denied access to primary schooling. One of the Programme's quantitative goals calls on all countries to achieve universal primary school education by the year 2015.

It also calls on countries to ensure women's full involvement in policy-making, to improve women's ability to earn income and achieve economic self-reliance, and to eliminate practices that discriminate against women. The Programme emphasizes the need for equitable treatment of girls and boys with respect to nutrition, health care, inheritance rights, education, and social, economic and political activity.

In groundbreaking recommendations the document underscores the need to promote *gender equality in the family*, noting in particular that men should take more responsibility for their own fertility and for parenting. It calls for special efforts to involve men in safe and responsible parenthood and family planning. The draft Programme of Action stresses the absolute necessity for the inclusion of male responsibilities in family life in the education of children from the earliest ages. Parents and schools are urged to ensure that attitudes that are respectful of women and girls as equals are instilled in boys from the earliest possible age, along with an understanding of their shared responsibilities in all aspects of a safe, secure and harmonious family life.

Countries are specifically called on to facilitate equal participation of women in the political process; promote women's education and employment; eliminate violence against women; expand access for girls to education and technical training; increase attention to their nutritional needs; enforce laws requiring marriage to be based on free and full consent; and prohibit female genital mutilation, infanticide, prenatal sex selection and child prostitution. Some of these recommendations bring problems affecting the health and welfare of women and girls out into the open for the first time at a world conference.

Chapter V, The Family, Its Roles, Rights, Composition and Structure.

The chapter stresses that while various forms of the family exist in different social, cultural, legal and political systems, the family is the basic unit of society and as such is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support. It acknowledges that families have come under pressure from rapid social and economic changes. It calls for policies and laws that better support the family, contribute to its stability and take into account its plurality of forms, particularly the growing number of single-parent households.

All levels of government, non-governmental organizations and concerned community organizations are encouraged to develop innovative ways to provide more effective assistance to families and the individuals within them who may be affected by extreme poverty, chronic unemployment, illness, domestic and sexual violence, dowry payments, drug or alcohol dependence, incest, and child abuse, neglect or abandonment. Countries are urged to support parents' participation in the labor force, eliminate coercion and discrimination in regard to marriage, and formulate family-sensitive policies related to housing, work, health, social security and education.

The broad consensus on the wording and spirit of this chapter reflects the extent of shared values with respect to the importance of families as the basic building block of societies.

Chapter VI, Population Growth and Structure.

By 2015, nearly 56 per cent of the global population is expected to live in urban areas, compared to just under 45 per cent in 1994. The urban population of developing countries is projected to reach 50 per cent by 2015, up from 26 per cent in 1975.

Developing countries continue to have very large proportions of children and young people. Greater investments in children by parents and societies are seen by the Programme of Action as essential to the achievement of sustained economic growth and development.

Elderly populations are increasing in many countries, necessitating social security systems and other measures that encourage multi-generational families, and allow elderly to lead healthy and productive lives. The Programme of Action urges Governments to strengthen formal and informal support systems and safety nets for elderly people and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against elderly people, paying special attention to the needs of elderly women.

The chapter further states that countries should address the specific needs of indigenous people and promote the social and economic integration of persons with disabilities.

Chapter VII, Reproductive Rights, Reproductive Health and Family Planning.

According to the Programme of Action, about 55 per cent of couples in developing countries use some method of family planning, a tenfold increase in absolute terms (to 460 million couples) and a fivefold increase in percentage terms since the 1960s. Family planning programmes have contributed to the decline in developing countries' fertility rates, from six to seven children per family in the 1960s to three to four children today.

However, the document notes that approximately 350 million couples lack access to a full range of modern family planning information and services. It estimates that 120 million women not currently using a modern family planning method would do so if one were available, affordable and acceptable to them and to their husbands. According to the document, the level of performance in meeting unmet needs for family planning and other Conference goals in the next 20 years is likely to determine whether world population in the year 2050 reaches 7.8 billion people (the UN's lowest projection) or goes as high as 12.5 billion.

This 46 paragraph chapter, the longest and most detailed of the document, sets the tone for a new approach to family planning, namely in the context of better quality comprehensive reproductive health care, and reaffirms the long-established right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so. The new approach to family planning downplays demographic targets to focus on the overall reproductive health needs and wishes of individuals, particularly of women.

The draft Programme of Action states that if women are to realize their full potential in their productive and community roles, they must be guaranteed reproductive rights and must be able to manage their reproductive roles. This means that they must have access to reliable information, to quality reproductive health care services, including family planning. The chapter also contains one of the quantitative goals of the Programme of action, namely that basic reproductive health care (in the context of primary health care) become universally available to all individuals, regardless of age, as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015.

The chapter notes that the reproductive health needs of adolescents have been largely ignored by existing services, even though adolescent pregnancy is cause for major concern in many countries. It emphasizes that too-early childbearing endangers the health of mothers and their children, hinders young women's educational opportunities and impedes efforts to improve women's status. Some 15 million adolescent girls -- married and unmarried -- become pregnant each year, according to the document.

Under the Programme of Action, family planning programmes must aim to establish a wide freedom of choice in matters of procreation. The document states explicitly that, although governments have a legitimate interest in population trends, coercion should have no place in family planning programmes. The aim of government programmes should be to assist individuals in ensuring that all pregnancies are planned and all children are wanted.

The chapter calls on all countries to assess the extent of national unmet need for good-quality family planning services, to take steps to meet these needs as soon as possible and no later than the year 2000.

Chapter VIII, Health, Morbidity and Mortality.

The document notes that at least half a million women die each year as a consequence of pregnancy and childbirth; 99 per cent of those deaths, almost all of them preventable, occur in developing countries. In some countries, as many as half of maternal deaths may result from unsafe abortions; many others result from the absence of the most basic antenatal, maternity and post-natal care.

Recognizing the substantial gains made in child survival over the last two decades, the document reports that infant mortality world-wide has dropped by one third since 1974, from 92 deaths per 1,000 live births to 62. But it notes that a huge gap remains between developing countries (with 69 deaths per 1,000) and developed countries (12 deaths per 1,000 births).

The document focuses the world's attention for the first time on the serious health consequences of clandestine abortions. While reflecting the consensus that abortion should not be promoted as a method of family planning, it urges countries to act within national laws to reduce deaths and morbidity from unsafe abortion. Chapter VIII specifically urges Governments and non-governmental organizations "to assess the health impact of unsafe abortion and to reduce the need for abortion through expanded and improved family planning services". It further states that: "Prevention of unwanted pregnancies must always be given the highest priority and all attempts should be made to eliminate the need for abortion. Women who have unwanted pregnancies should have ready access to reliable information and compassionate counseling. . . . In circumstances where abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe. In all cases, women should have access to quality services for the management of complications arising from abortion." The ICPD is the first UN conference to address unsafe abortion as a major public health concern.

This chapter places great importance on the role of primary health care services in further reducing morbidity and mortality in order to better guarantee the survival and health of infants and children, reduce maternal morbidity and mortality, and prevent HIV/AIDS. The chapter endorses the set of goals adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children for the year 2000. It further proposes infant and child mortality reduction

goals up to the year 2015. These goals are: by the year 2000 to reduce infant and under-5 mortality rates by one third, or to 50 to 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever is less; by the year 2005 (for countries with intermediate mortality levels), achieve an infant mortality rate below 50 deaths per 1,000 and an under-5 mortality rate below 60 deaths per 1,000; by 2015, achieve an infant mortality rate below 35 per 1,000 live births and an under-5 mortality rate below 45 per 1,000.

New emphasis is given to complications related to pregnancy and childbirth as among the leading causes of mortality for women of reproductive age in many parts of the developing world. Countries are urged to strive for significant reductions in maternal mortality by the year 2015. The goals are: to reduce maternal mortality by one half of the 1990 levels by the year 2000 and by a further one half by 2105.

The chapter also encourages the international community to mobilize the human and financial resources required to reduce the rate of transmission of HIV infection and urges Governments to mobilize all segments of society to control the AIDS pandemic, including non-governmental organizations, community organizations, religious leaders, the private sector, the media, schools and health facilities.

Chapter IX, Population Distribution, Urbanization and Internal Migration.

Given the rapid growth of urban areas in many parts of the world, the document emphasizes the need to foster a more balanced distribution of the population by, among others, reducing urban-rural inequality, fostering environmentally sustainable development of rural areas and small and medium-sized cities, and better managing cities to improve the quality of life of the urban poor.

Countries are also called upon to address the causes of internal displacement, including environmental degradation, natural disasters, armed conflict and forced resettlement. Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to strengthen development assistance for internally displaced persons so that they can return to their places of origin.

Chapter X, International Migration.

The document recognizes that population growth, environmental degradation and inequalities between and within countries and regions are among the factors pushing people to choose migration, both internal and international. The means to reduce migration pressures over the long term are thus to stimulate economic growth and job creation at home, to reduce rapid population growth and in general promote sustainable national development.

Numbers of international migrants are rising rapidly. An estimated 100 million - 2 per cent of the world's population -- live outside their countries of birth; some 17 million have fled from warfare and political violence, and 20 million from other violence or environmental catastrophe; the rest are economic migrants. In 1989, international migrants sent about \$66 billion to their home countries, more than the world total of \$46 billion in official development assistance (ODA).

Poverty and environmental degradation, combined with the absence of peace and security, and human rights violations are all factors affecting international migration. Governments are urged to address these root causes of migration, especially those related to poverty; to encourage more cooperation between sending and receiving countries; to facilitate the reintegration of returning migrants; to prevent the exploitation of undocumented migrants; to ensure that their basic human rights are protected; and to protect them from racism and xenophobia.

The document urges all parties concerned to find durable solutions to the plight of refugees and displaced persons and to prevent the erosion of the right to asylum.

Chapter XI, Population, Development and Education.

This chapter stresses that education is a key factor in sustainable development and an important component of human well-being. The education of women and girls contributes to women's empowerment, to postponement of marriage, and to reductions in family size. When mothers are better educated, children's survival rate tends to increase. The document, citing the goals of the World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, calls on all countries to strive for complete access to primary school by both boys and girls before the year 2105 and to close the gender gap in primary and secondary school by the year 2005.

The document gives high priority to public education campaigns on population and development issues, including responsible parenthood, safe motherhood, reproductive health and rights, maternal and child health and family planning, patterns of discrimination against girls and women, gender equity, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, responsible sexual behavior, teenage pregnancy, racism and xenophobia, aging populations, and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Chapter XII, Technology, Research and Development.

The document calls for improved collection, analysis and dissemination of data in order to allow better understanding of the relationships between population, development and the environment. It focuses on the need for more biomedical research in order to expand people's choice of family planning methods, particularly male methods, and to combat the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Research is urged which would enable population and related development programmes to take into account the views of their intended beneficiaries, especially women, the young and other less empowered groups.

Chapter XIII, National Action.

The Programme of Action calls on countries to foster active involvement of elected representatives of people, particularly parliamentarians, and of concerned groups and individuals, especially at the grass-roots level, so as to build up the capacity and self-reliance to undertake concerted national actions. The document encourages Governments to increase the skill level and accountability of managers and others involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national population and development strategies, policies, plans and programmes.

This chapter includes estimates of the funding levels required to meet developing countries' needs and the needs of countries with economies in transition in the period 2000-2015 for basic reproductive health services, including family planning; prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS; and population data collection, analysis and dissemination, policy formulation and research. The implementation of programmes in these three areas will cost \$17 billion in 2000, \$18.5 billion in 2005, \$20.5 billion in 2010 and \$21.7 billion in 2015.

Chapter XIV, International Cooperation.

The document affirms that there is a strong consensus on the need to mobilize significant additional financial resources for national population programmes in support of sustainable development, including reproductive health and family planning programmes. Governments are urged to strengthen mechanisms for international cooperation, including intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations. The chapter emphasizes new partnerships within and between countries, including greater South-South collaboration.

Developing countries themselves will continue to provide, on average, two thirds of the resources needed, but international assistance will have to increase to up to one third of the costs, a share projected to total \$5.7 billion in 2000 and 7.2 billion in 2015 (in 1993 dollars).

Chapter XV, Partnership with the Non-governmental Sector.

The entire chapter emphasizes the need for an effective partnership between all levels of government and the full range of non-governmental organizations and local and community groups and the private sector. The language on NGOs is the strongest ever to come out of a United Nations conference and reflects the extraordinary level of participation by NGOs in the conference and its three-year preparatory process. For developing country women, in particular, the conference has been an empowering experience.

Chapter XVI, Follow-up to the Conference.

The Programme of Action calls for new national, regional and subregional and international mechanisms to provide policy guidance, resource mobilization, coordination, sharing of experience, and monitoring and reporting of progress in implementing the Programme of Action. The UN is called on to organize a regular review of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, and to consider establishing a separate executive board to oversee the activities of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which are currently overseen by the joint UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board.

All countries are encouraged to establish appropriate national follow-up, accountability and monitoring mechanisms, in partnership with non-governmental organizations, community groups, representatives of the media and the academic community, and parliamentarians.

Highlights of Concurrent Meetings

Parliamentarians Conference - Cairo Declaration

Parliamentarians from most of the countries represented at the ICPD met for two days on the eve of the Conference. Their final "Cairo Declaration on Population and Development" notes that: "Parliamentarians the world over have long recognized the delicate balance between population and natural resources" and calls on governments to deal with population issues "not in isolation but within the larger context of sustainable development of the planet."

The parliamentarians committed themselves "as elected representative of the people, to do our utmost to remove all remaining barriers in our countries that inhibit access to family planning services, information and education, as well as to help support the provision of reproductive health and family planning services as widely as possible."

The six page Declaration goes on to comment on several other major themes of the ICPD, including gender equality and empowerment of women, health and mortality, and resource mobilization. It ends with a call to action for parliamentarians everywhere to enact appropriate legislation, ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, monitor its implementation and the implementation of population policies and programmes, approve increased budgetary resources for population programmes and generate support among constituents.

Partners for Population and Development

Ten countries with highly successful population and development efforts announced at the ICPD their decision to organize a new South to South initiative called Partners for Population and Development, based on the principle that successful countries should share ideas that work amongst themselves and with other countries launching family planning and population programs. The ten founding Partners are: Egypt, Thailand, Morocco, Zimbabwe, Colombia, Mexico, Bangladesh, Tunisia, Indonesia and Kenya. In addition to promoting a more comprehensive program of technical assistance between developing countries (TCDC), the Partners promised to become a force for resource mobilization to support these and other activities. Each country presented a case study of its population success.

Cairo Youth Declaration

The statement endorsed by some 200 national and international youth groups at the NGO Forum 1994, notes that "young people make up most of the world's population." The statement characterizes population and development concerns "as central to our commitment, sense of responsibility and action to affect change in the world" It ends with the call for a world without "economic injustice, dire social and individual needs; a world where all live in a spirit of mutual respect, cooperation, tolerance, peace and justice."

Religious Interest Group - Statement of Principles

The statement, by an inter-denominational group of clergy supporting the Programme of Action at the NGO Forum, recognizes nine principles reflecting "shared religious commitments to justice, equity, peace, the integrity of creation, and respect for human dignity". Among them is the principle that: "Equity and justice demand that in a world with a plurality of belief systems, no single system should be imposed on or held up as the standard or norm for all life. Other principles recognize "the human right of every child to be wanted, loved and nurtured"; the basic right "to control one's own sexual and reproductive life"; the need to base "family and community life on full partnerships between men and women", and the principle that: "no species, including the human, has the right to propagate indefinitely or to

live in ways which threaten the ability of other species or future generations of its own species to sustain their lives."

Environmental NGOs

The statement signed by some 200 environmental NGOs from nearly 40 developed and developing countries calls the ICPD "a breakthrough in cooperation between national governments and NGOs". The statement also reaffirms "the vital relationship between environmental protection and access to reproductive health services, family planning, education and the empowerment of women".

Note: Additional statements and declarations are expected to be issued on September 13, the final day of the conference by various groups of NGOs. These include a statement by the Women's Caucus at the NGO Forum and statements by several regional groupings. These statements should be available at the Press Center of the NGO Forum.