

MEXICO CITY DECLARATION August 1984

1. The International Conference on Population met in Mexico City from 6 to 14 August 1984, to appraise the implementation of the World Population Plan of Action, adopted by consensus at Bucharest, 10 years ago. The Conference reaffirmed the full validity of the principles and objectives of the World Population Plan of Action and adopted a set of recommendations for the further implementation of the Plan in the years ahead.

2. The world has undergone far-reaching changes in the past decade. Significant progress in many fields important for human welfare has been made through national and international efforts. However, for a large number of countries it has been a period of instability, increased unemployment, mounting external indebtedness, stagnation and even decline in economic growth. The number of people living in absolute poverty has increased.

3. Economic difficulties and problems of resource mobilization have been particularly serious in the developing countries. Growing international disparities have further exacerbated existing problems in social and economic terms. Firm and widespread hope was expressed that increasing international co-operation will lead to a growth in welfare and wealth, their just and equitable distribution and minimal waste in use of resources, thereby promoting development and peace for the benefit of the world's population.

4. Population growth, high mortality and morbidity, and migration problems continue to be causes of great concern requiring immediate action.

5. The Conference confirms that the principal aim of social, economic and human development, of which population goals and policies are integral parts, is to improve the standard of living and quality of life of the people. This Declaration constitutes a solemn undertaking by the nations and international organizations gathered in Mexico City to respect national sovereignty, to combat all forms of racial discrimination, including apartheid, and to promote social and economic development, human rights and individual freedom.

6. Since Bucharest the global population growth rate has declined from 2.03 to 1.67 per cent per year. In the next decade the growth rate will decline more slowly. Moreover, the annual increase is expected to continue and may reach 90 million by the year 2000. Ninety per cent of that increase will occur in developing countries and at that time 6.1 billion people are expected to inhabit the Earth.

7. Demographic differences between developed and developing countries remain striking. The average life expectancy at birth, which has increased almost everywhere, is 73 years in developed countries, while in developing countries it is only 57 years and families in developing countries tend to be much larger than elsewhere. This gives cause for concern since social and population pressures may contribute to the continuation of the wide disparity in welfare and the quality of life between developing and developed countries.

8. In the past decade, population issues have been increasingly recognized as a fundamental element in development planning. To be realistic, development policies, plans and programmes must reflect the inextricable links between population, resources, environment and development. Priority should be given to action programmes integrating all essential population and development factors, taking fully into account the need for rational utilization of natural resources and protection of the physical environment and preventing its further deterioration.

9. The experience with population policies in recent years is encouraging. Mortality and morbidity rates have been lowered, although not to the desired extent. Family planning programmes have been successful in reducing fertility at relatively low cost. Countries which consider that their population growth rate hinders their national development plans should appropriate population policies and programmes. Timely action could avoid the accentuation of problems such as overpopulation, unemployment, food shortages, and environmental degradation.

10. Population and development policies reinforce each other when they are responsive to individual, family and community needs. Experience from the past decade demonstrates the necessity of the full participation by the entire community and grass-roots organizations in the design and implementation of policies and programmes. This will ensure that programmes are relevant to local needs and in keeping with personal and social values. It will also promote social awareness of demographic problems.

11. Improving the status of women and enhancing their role is an important goal in itself and will also influence family life and size in a positive way. Community support is essential to bring about the full integration and participation of women into all phases and functions of the development process. Institutional, economic and cultural barriers must be removed and broad and swift action taken to assist women in attaining full equality with men in the social, political and economic life of their communities. To achieve this goal, it is necessary for men and women to jointly share responsibilities in areas such as family life, child-care and family planning. Governments should

formulate and implement concrete policies which would enhance the status and role of women.

12. Unwanted high fertility adversely affects the health and welfare of individuals and families, especially among the poor, and seriously impedes social and economic progress in many countries. Women and children are the main victims of unregulated fertility. Too many, too close, too early and too late pregnancies are a major cause of maternal, infant and childhood mortality and morbidity.

13. Although considerable progress has been made since Bucharest, millions of people still lack access to safe and effective family planning methods. By the year 2000 some 1.6 billion women will be of childbearing age, 1.3 billion of them in developing countries. Major efforts must be made now to ensure that all couples and individuals can exercise their basic human right to decide freely, responsibly and without coercion, the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so. In exercising this right, the best interests of their living and future children as well as the responsibility towards the community should be taken into account.

14. Although modern contraceptive technology has brought considerable progress into family planning programmes, increased funding is required in order to develop new methods and to improve the safety, efficacy and acceptability of existing methods. Expanded research should also be undertaken in human reproduction to solve problems of infertility and subfecundity.

15. As part of the overall goal to improve the health standards for all people, special attention should be given to maternal and child health services within a primary health care system. Through breast-feeding, adequate nutrition, clean water, immunization programmes, oral rehydration therapy and birth spacing, a virtual revolution in child survival could be achieved. The impact would be dramatic in humanitarian and fertility terms.

16. The coming decades will see rapid changes in population structures with marked regional variations. The absolute numbers of children and youth in developing countries will continue to rise so rapidly that special programmes will be necessary to respond to their needs and aspirations, including productive employment. Aging of population is a phenomenon which many countries will experience. This issue requires attention particularly in developed countries in view of its social implications and the active contribution the aged can make to the social, cultural and economic life in their countries.

17. Rapid urbanization will continue to be a salient feature. By the end of the century, 3 billion

people, 48 per cent of the world's population, are expected to live in cities, frequently very large cities. Integrated urban and rural development strategies should therefore be an essential part of population policies. They should be based on a full evaluation of the costs and benefits to individuals, groups and regions involved, should respect basic human rights and use incentives rather than restrictive measures.

18. The volume and nature of international migratory movements continue to undergo rapid changes. Illegal or undocumented migration and refugee movements have gained particular importance; labour migration of considerable magnitude occurs in all regions. The outflow of skills remains a serious human resource problem in many developing countries. It is indispensable to safeguard the individual and social rights of the persons involved and to protect them from exploitation and treatment not in conformity with basic human rights; it is also necessary to guide these different migration streams. To achieve this, the co-operation of countries of origin and destination and the assistance of international organizations are required.

19. As the years since 1974 have shown, the political commitment of Heads of State and other leaders and the willingness of Governments to take the lead in formulating population programmes and allocating the necessary resources are crucial for the further implementation of the World Population Plan of Action. Governments should attach high priority to the attainment of self-reliance in the management of such programmes, strengthen their administrative and managerial capabilities, and ensure co-ordination of international assistance at the national level.

20. The years since Bucharest have also shown that international co-operation in the field of population is essential for the implementation of recommendations agreed upon by the international community and can be notably successful. The need for increased resources for population activities is emphasized. Adequate and substantial international support and assistance will greatly facilitate the efforts of Governments. It should be provided wholeheartedly and in a spirit of universal solidarity and enlightened self-interest. The United Nations family should continue to perform its vital responsibilities.

21. Non-governmental organizations have a continuing important role in the implementation of the World Population Plan of Action and deserve encouragement and support from Governments and international organizations. Members of Parliament, community leaders, scientists, the media and others in influential positions are called upon to assist in all aspects of population and development work.

22. At Bucharest, the world was made aware of the gravity and magnitude of the population problems and their close interrelationship with economic and social development. The message of Mexico City is to forge ahead with effective implementation of the World Population Plan of Action aimed at improving standards of living and quality of life for all people of this planet in promotion of their common destiny in peace and security.

23. IN ISSUING THIS DECLARATION, ALL PARTICIPANTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION REITERATE THEIR COMMITMENT AND REDEDICATE THEMSELVES TO THE FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN.