

NEW DELHI DECLARATION February 1984

PREAMBLE

1. We, the Parliamentarians from 24 countries of Asia attending the First Conference of the ASIAN FORUM of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in New Delhi from 17 to 20 February 1984, in addressing ourselves to the issues related to Population and Development:
 - Note with satisfaction the increased commitment of Parliamentarians to population programmes despite worsening global economic and political conditions since the Colombo Declaration on Population and Development in 1979; the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Resources, Population and Development in 1980; and Beijing Declaration on Population and Development in 1981. Such commitment is reflected in the establishment of National Associations of Parliamentarians for creating and sustaining the awareness of the importance of population issues in relation to development; and increase in resources mobilized domestically and externally for population programmes;
 - Recognize the progress made towards the attainment of the demographic goals in terms of fertility rates and infant mortality rates through organized family planning programmes and general socio-economic development activities;
 - Acknowledge the greater need to curtail unfavourable rates of population growth in the Asian region in view of the projected population size of the region estimated increase to 3.6 billion by the year 2000 from 2.6 billion in 1981 when the Asian Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development was held in Beijing;
 - Reaffirm the commitment to help achieve one of the key recommendations of the Beijing Declaration to attain a one per cent population growth rate for the Asian region, by the year 2000;
 - Affirm the need for further reduction of infant mortality as a basic human right and to accelerate family planning acceptance;
 - Realize the need for effective measures to achieve appropriate pattern of population distribution for the overall socio-economic development.

2. In order to deal with these issues, more practically and effectively, this FORUM addresses itself to the following major demographic variables:
 1. Population growth and fertility rates
 2. Mortality, especially infant mortality; and
 3. Population distribution including rural urban migration.

3. The FORUM recognizes that the maintenance of peace and national security in the Asian region and ending of the arms-race are essential. It is also necessary to put an end to all activities of terrorism which tend to disturb social peace and stability.
4. The provision of family planning information and services in the pursuit of demographic goals, whether these seek to increase or reduce population growth, must be based firmly on the recognition of family planning as a basic human right.
5. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and Inter-Parliamentary Union sponsored the First International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in Colombo in 1979. The Colombo Conference established the potential role of the elected representatives in meeting growth challenges of population and development issues. To this end, it called for the formation of associations of parliamentarians for generating and sustaining their involvement.
6. UNFPA also sponsored the First Asian Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in Beijing in 1981 which stressed the need for increasing awareness and understanding of the interdependent relationship between population and development through sharing of knowledge and experiences. One of the major decisions of the Beijing Conference was to set up the ASIAN FORUM OF PARLIAMENTARIANS to implement its recommendations. Accordingly, the FORUM was inaugurated in New Delhi on 9 March 1982. Similar conferences of parliamentarians were held in other regions leading to the formation of the Global Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development.
7. Since the Colombo and Beijing Conferences, national associations of parliamentarians in several Asian countries have taken initiatives in securing political consensus among different political parties and leaders of various social and religious sectors. This has generated Political Will, essential to pursue Population Policies with greater sense of urgency. Colombo to New Delhi is a journey from Political Consensus to Political Will. This has led to mobilization and participation of people. Parliamentarians have an important role to play. They must accept the challenge that is so important to mankind by harnessing all possible resources further and by strengthening and creating new links with the people. This is the greatest challenge that parliamentarians are called upon to undertake in times ahead.

Specific Goals

8. Parliamentarians should work together to achieve the following specific goals:

- A. A decrease of population growth in the Asian region as a whole, in order to attain a growth rate of one per cent by the year 2000.

B. A decrease in mortality rates throughout Asia and specifically the reduction of infant mortality in the region by 50 per cent by the year 2000.

C. A balanced distribution of population in Asian countries through policies to accommodate planned urban growth together with efforts to retain populations in rural areas.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

Population Growth Rate Reduction

The following actions need to be initiated and supported by parliamentarians in order to achieve the desired rate of growth:

- Incorporation of comprehensive population policies in all development plans.
- Immediate move towards universal literacy, with special emphasis of female literacy. Improvement of the status of women by removing legal barriers and increasing their economic opportunities.
- Rapid expansion of easily accessible family planning information and services to all segments of the population through out the region.
- Improvement of basic health services to all in the shortest possible time, and the linkage of these services with family planning services.
- Strengthening of family planning programmes through improved management, expanded training of all categories of personnel, and development of information and communication programmes appropriate to different population groups, especially the youth who constitute nearly 60 per cent of the Asian population.
- Providing a full range of contraceptive methods on a continuous basis, and introducing new techniques as they become available.
- Supporting research on new contraceptive technologies, including methods acceptable to all religious groups. Assuring community participation at all levels, both in the planning and implementation of family planning programmes, free of unnecessary red tape.

Mortality, Especially Infant and Early Child Mortality

Infant and early child mortality rates have not declined sufficiently. The achievement of lower mortality rates, in addition to enhancing wellbeing, contributes to fertility decline and the acceptance of small family size. Similarly, increased spacing of children contributes to infant survival. The major causes of infant and early child mortality and disability should be tackled through a co-ordinated primary health care approach including:

- The expansion of immunization programmes to all children.
- Nutrition and nutrition education, including the wide use of child growth measurement charts.
- Health education of parents in the treatment of common childhood diseases, including the treatment of diarrhea by oral rehydration therapy.
- The provision of potable water in both slum and rural areas.
- Education programmes on the benefits of breast-feeding.
- Training programmes involving community leaders and especially traditional birth attendants and healers in the identification and simple treatment of common childhood diseases.

Population Distribution

Imbalanced population distribution in relation to resources is one of the factors hindering socio-economic development. In particular, rapid urbanization is not only taxing the national and urban resources and infrastructure, it also contributes to deforestation, soil erosion and ecological disequilibrium. Some of the measures to be undertaken in order to remedy the imbalance are:

- To formulate and implement a comprehensive national urbanization policy including the reduction of the pull factors of urban centres, and development of medium-sized cities and small townships.
- To provide more employment opportunities in rural areas.
- To improve and expand basic social and health amenities including MCH/Family Planning services and education in rural areas.
- To develop appropriate measures to regulate urban growth.

CALL TO ACTION

THE CONFERENCE CALLS ON:

1. Parliamentarians of Asia

To strengthen national associations of parliamentarians to achieve a greater understanding of the inter-relationships between population and development and to facilitate mutual exchange and dialogue among themselves.

To take appropriate initiatives including legislative measures, in support of the Programme of Action. To establish close relationships with the academic and research community, in order to bring greater

coherence to the formulation and evolution of population policies.

To initiate the formation of statutory bodies in each country to coordinate the formulation and implementation of population policies and programmes.

To initiate legislation, where relevant, to raise the minimum age of marriage to 20 years.

To establish a Parliamentary Committee on Population and Development.

2. Governments

To implement the Programme of Action as rapidly as possible.

To provide an adequate share of national resources to implement the Programme of Action, and for other development programmes having a bearing on population. To strengthen socio-economic programmes directed specifically towards reducing social and economic disparities.

To increase support to non-governmental and voluntary agencies to sustain and expand their initiatives.

To increase population assistance through multilateral agencies, including UNFPA, and non-governmental agencies, including IPPF.

To increase the overall volume of official development assistance, and to channel this assistance through multilateral organizations, such as UNDP, and bilateral agencies.

To encourage developing countries to mobilise human and material resources so as to increase their self-reliance.

To organize programmes for the welfare of the aged and to encourage their continued participation as productive members of society.

3. Non-Governmental Organizations

International organizations, such as IPPF, national NGOs and academic and developmental institutions should continue to pursue a positive and innovative role, in expanding and intensifying their efforts to stimulate family planning programmes.

To continue to enlist voluntary support at the community level and explore new ideas for the wider acceptance of the small family norm.

To work closely with Parliamentarians on matters of population and development in order to facilitate the effective formulation and implementation of population policies and programmes.

4. Press and Media

To provide positive and constructive coverage of population issues.

5. International Community

To increase the financial support of multilateral organizations, such as UNFPA and bilateral agencies, to the governments and NGOs of Asian countries.

To increase support for research on bio-medical, communication and programme aspects of family planning.

To call upon the United Nations to declare a World Population Day to focus attention on population issues.

To request its member-governments for substantial participation of parliamentarians in the International Conference on Population to be held in Mexico City in 1984.

6. The Steering Committee of the Asian Forum

To continue to provide opportunities for dialogue between Parliamentarians of Asia.

To extend the dialogue to local legislative bodies.

To review and report on the progress of the Programme of Action.

To work to secure a substantial participation of parliamentarians on national delegations, to the International Conference of Population and apprise their delegations of recommendations of this Conference.

7. The Global Committee of Parliamentarians

To continue and accelerate their global effort to stimulate and facilitate the creation of regional and subregional and national groups of parliamentarians.

To encourage and assist the work of such parliamentary groups to provide an informal link between parliamentarians and relevant international agencies and institutions.

To generally enhance and promote the key role of parliamentarians in Global Population and Development issues within and outside the UN system.

REDEDICATION

Finally, in order to secure early implementation of the Programme of Action, we, the Parliamentarians assembled at this Conference, will work for spreading benefits of population and

development programmes to all levels of society, especially the poor and the underprivileged and improvement of the socio-economic levels of the people. To this end, we rededicate ourselves to work for implementing the Programme of Action, with a view to securing a better future for mankind.

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FINALLY, IN ALL THESE EFFORTS,

We commit ourselves to work closely with other organizations in order to realise the aims and objectives of this Declaration.