

BANGKOK DECLARATION October 1990

PREAMBLE

1.1 We, the Parliamentarians from 21 countries of Asia attending the Third Conference of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in Bangkok, Thailand, from 15 to 18 October 1990, in addressing ourselves to the issues related to population and development:

- Note with satisfaction some significant achievements in attaining the goals set by the Second Conference of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in Beijing in 1987;
- Recognize that the further integration of population concerns into development planning is essential to the stabilization of population growth rates in all countries of Asia, which in turn is critical to our collective efforts to balance population, resources and the environment and to sustain development;
- Reemphasize the importance of family planning programmes and socio-economic development activities in improving the health and welfare of women and in reducing fertility and infant and maternal mortality rates;
- Accept the responsibility to promote and support activities aimed at achieving an effective and integrated approach to population and development problems through, inter alia, the development of legislative agenda and the mobilization of governmental and public support;
- Reiterate our strong resolve to help achieve an annual population growth rate of 1 per cent for the Asian region by the year 2000;
- Emphasize the urgent need to accelerate the acceptance of family planning, both as an important health measure and as an effective and safe method to reduce fertility;
- Declare that the principle of equality between men and women means equality in human rights and responsibilities;
- Recognize that the surest way to achieve sustained decline in fertility is to invest in social and human resource development, improve mother and child health, enhance the status and education of women and make family planning as widely available as possible to both men and women;
- Express concern at the social and economic implications of increasing numbers of young and aged people in Asian countries and recognize the need to devise special programmes to promote their active participation in social and economic development;
- Affirm, in principle, the population goals and objectives as well as the programme priorities and approaches set forth in the Amsterdam Declaration, "A better life for future generations";

- Reaffirm the need for further disarmament and utilization of the resources thus made available for population and development activities.

Demographic situation in Asia

1.2 Despite rapid and substantial declines in fertility in the region as a whole, Asia's current population of 3.1 billion will reach 3.7 billion by the end of the century. By and large, the biggest increases will occur in the poorest countries, those by definition least equipped to meet the needs of the new arrivals and invest in their future. For example, South Asia, in general growing at 234 per cent per year, will add 350 million during the decade, whereas East Asia, known for its spectacular advances in contraceptive usage, will add only 200 million.

1.3 An ever-increasing proportion of this growth is taking place in Asian cities, which have been at the heart of the process of change. Such urban development has led to greater industrialization, affluence and increased consumption. But it has also increased industrial pollution, damaged forests and agricultural land, added to the global warming trend and made slum dwellers and squatters out of half of Asia's urban population. The region is also witnessing increasing aging of its population in part due to the improved health care services available. This aging trend is creating profound socio-economic and psychological implications which require a significant amount of societal resources.

Investing in the future

1.4 While mindful of the differences in social, economic and political conditions' in the countries of Asia and respectful of the national sovereignty of each country, we recognize the need, common to Parliamentarians everywhere, to reassess our assumptions about development This requires, among other things:

- Taking seriously the growing concern with environmental damage and its causes;
- Making a direct and all-out attack on both poverty and rapid population growth, notably through the development of human resources and social programmes, with the purpose of relieving human suffering, slowing population growth, and creating a balanced development;
- Developing suitable alternatives to current urbanization trends;
- Investing in strong and determined family planning programmes;
- Investing in women as human resources and/or a priority for social and economic development;

- Emphasizing self-determination as the foundation of national development

1.5 The Forum stresses that economic development cannot, and must not, be bought at the cost of human development. Measures to reduce fertility, mortality and migration levels must be supplemented and complemented by measures seeking to influence related social, economic and environmental factors. Population policies and programmes must therefore go beyond health and family welfare and address such issues as social and economic inequality, unemployment, the role and status of women, education and illiteracy, and environmental degradation.

1.6 Women, who comprise half the world's population, must be among the top priorities for social investment. Women must not, however, be regarded merely as contraceptive agents, or only as a means for economic growth but rather as human persons equal to men in their dignity and worth as human beings. They should have equal educational opportunities. In Asia, as in other regions of the developing world, women are responsible in large part for the production of food and the gathering of fuel and water. They are at the centre of development and therefore must play a vital role in nation-building as well as in agricultural and environmental management and social and economic development.

1.7 Ignoring women's needs can have devastating effects: uncontrolled population growth; high infant and child mortality; a weakened economy; ineffective agricultural production; a deteriorating environment; a generally divided society and a poorer quality of life for all. For girls and women, it can mean unequal opportunity, less schooling, poorer health, lower wages, inadequate protection under the law and a life devoid of choice.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

1.8 Any programme of action seeking to address the complex issue of population and development must, by definition, be rooted in three basic principles: (1) that population, resources and the environment are inextricably linked; (2) that development cannot be sustained without due regard to each of these factors; and (3) that economic growth must be balanced with population growth, concern for the environment and social progress. Thus, an effective development strategy must, at the least, seek to reduce population growth, balance population distribution, protect the environment, ensure adequate food supply to all sectors of society, in particular those most disadvantaged, and eliminate poverty. It must also attempt to reduce maternal and infant mortality, improve the status and role of women, provide for the security of the aged, address the special needs of youth, and

enhance health care and family planning services.

Reducing population growth

Rapid population growth, among other things, impedes balanced development, destroys forests and degrades land and water supplies. This in turn threatens the food supply and lessens the quality of life. For their part, Parliamentarians should use their considerable influence and good offices to initiate or support the following actions to help reduce population growth rates:

- Encourage the formulation and strengthening of comprehensive national population strategies as integral components of national development plans;
- Integrate population planning into all other aspects of development planning;
- Foster governmental and societal support for fertility regulation;
- Increase the number of women using family planning services by making family planning information and services widely available and easily accessible to all segments of the population, including men, teenagers and newly-wed couples by utilizing all available channels, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
- Adapt family planning services to local customs and preferences so as to encourage community participation;
- Strengthen family planning programmes through improved management and expanded training of personnel;
- Facilitate the local production of contraceptives, through supportive legislation and the procurement of the necessary resources;
- Secure adequate public funding for research on developing contraceptive methods that are cheap, simple, reliable, safe and reversible.

Reducing mortality, especially maternal and infant and child mortality

Childbirth anywhere has its risks. But for mothers and children in the developing world the risk is staggering. Each year, at least 500,000 women die from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes, 99 per cent of them in developing countries. In some parts of Asia, a woman's chances of dying as a result of childbirth are 1 in 18. World-wide, young children age five and under fare even worse, with 14 million or so dying every twelve months. The greatest tragedy is that most of these deaths could be prevented through simple, effective and inexpensive measures, such as:

- Developing special information and education campaigns to create awareness about the demographic and health effects of pregnancies that are too early, too late, too many and too close together;

- Improving and expanding the delivery of primary health care and services and integrating these services with family planning services;
- Further integrating family planning programmes into agricultural, industrial and social programmes;
- Expanding immunization programmes to all children;
- Expanding and improving programmes on nutrition and health;
- Encouraging breast-feeding for nutritional and family planning reasons;
- Intensifying training programmes, follow-up and supervision for traditional birth attendants and healers for safe delivery and in the identification and simple treatment of common childhood diseases.

Balancing population distribution and resources

There is little doubt that the world is in the middle of an urban revolution. Since 1950, the number of people living in cities in developing countries has more than quadrupled. For Asia, the proportion of people who will be living in urban areas in the year 2000 is projected at 35 per cent. Such urban growth seriously strains the delivery of vital social services and the provision of basic necessities, especially to the poorest among society, chews up agricultural land, and aggravates the growing imbalance between population and resources. Among the measures needed to help remedy this situation are:

- Formulation and implementation of national strategies, co-ordinated and integrated with national development plans, aimed at offsetting the growth of large urban centres by investing in the development and expansion of medium-sized and small urban centres;
- Development of more adequate statistical databases on social programmes, including health and family planning services in urban areas;
- Relocation of industrial, social and educational facilities away from major urban centres, where feasible;
- Improvement and expansion in rural areas of basic social and health amenities, including maternal and child health care and family planning (MCH/FP) services and education;
- Creation and expansion of employment opportunities in rural areas;
- Development of the informal sector — composed of people, often migrants, engaged in petty trading and services, food processing, low-cost transportation and construction - as an integral part of the city's economic and cultural landscape;
- Development of urban infrastructure with the aim of providing adequate and affordable basic services to people already living in urban areas, including eradication of slum areas.

Safeguarding the environment

Increasing human demands are damaging the natural resource base - land, water and air - upon which all development depends. Population plays a key role in this process. For any given type of technology, level of consumption or waste, or level of poverty or equality, the more people there are, the greater is the impact on the environment. This is particularly true of the degradation of the soils and forests of developing countries and global warming, both of which currently pose the greatest threat to human welfare and survival. Establishing a sustainable relationship between human numbers and resources in the Asian context will require, among other things:

- Slowing and actively stabilizing population growth;
- Providing suitable directions and measures for balanced urban development;
- Adopting legislation to protect village forest and farmland rights, particularly those of the poorest farmers and women;
- Investing in the agricultural resource base, both to enhance the productivity of existing farmland and to rehabilitate and revitalize degraded agricultural land;
- Ensuring the adequate supply and timely distribution of food to all sectors of society, especially the underprivileged groups;
- Prohibiting the use of environmentally unsafe fertilizers and pesticides, as well as the dumping of industrial wastes;
- Promulgating appropriate laws to prevent deforestation;
- Developing and introducing environmentally safe industrial processes;
- Educating and encouraging farmers in better water and irrigation management and in the use of bio-fertilizers;

Full involvement of women

Investing in programmes for women means widening their choices and reducing their dependence on children for status and support. It means taking women's abilities, rights and needs into account at every stage of development planning, so that women's status and security are derived from their contribution to society rather than solely from child-bearing. Family planning is one of the most important investments a society can make, since it represents the freedom from which other freedoms flow. The same is true of investments in women's health and education. Specific measures need to be included:

- Ensuring that women are consulted and involved at every level in the organization of family planning services;
- Identifying problems, developing a legislative agenda and mobilizing governmental and

public support with a view to improving the status of women, in particular destitute and migrant women, abolishing discriminatory practices in marriage, and reducing maternal mortality;

- Repealing all laws and practices preventing or restricting women from owning or administering productive resources;
- Expanding educational and training opportunities for women on an equal basis with men, including special attention to the needs of illiterate women;
- Documenting and publicizing women's vital contributions to development;. Ensuring that national statistics are desegregated by sex;
- Providing the widest possible audience with accurate and full information on women's productive and reproductive rights and responsibilities;
- Ensuring that women have access to credit, where possible, without collateral and improving their access to markets in the agricultural and informal sector;
- Establishing and enforcing laws guaranteeing equal employment opportunity and equal pay for work of equal value;
- Providing adequate support services so that there would be no barriers to women entering the workforce.

Providing security for the aged

Successful family planning produces smaller families. Successful economic development often results in high social mobility and dispersed families. The advent of smaller nuclear families in place of larger extended families threatens the traditional Asian system of security for the aged. Thus, an alternative mechanism is needed to provide social, economic and psychological security for Asia's aging population. The legislative and administrative measures required to address the needs of increasing numbers of elderly include:-

- Developing a comprehensive national policy, co-ordinated and integrated with national development policies, relating to elderly people who are either without families or are not being cared for by their families;
- Co-ordinating efforts to deal with aging with those aimed at moderating population growth;
- Strengthening the scientific understanding of aging as it pertains to the actual conditions of each individual country and adopting a long-term approach based on the overall enhancement of social and economic development;
- Extending the age of mandatory retirement and creating employment opportunities for those who wish to work after retirement, accompanied by specialized retraining

programmes;

- Reviewing national health insurance plans and pension schemes with a view to identifying cost effective ways of improving coverage and benefits for the elderly, including elderly women who comprise the majority of the elderly;
- Developing appropriate measures based especially on community resources to sustain and promote family ties to provide not only financial but also psychological support for the aged.

Addressing the special needs of youth

One consequence of rapid population growth is an ever-increasing proportion of young people dependent on others for their social and economic welfare. In the industrialized world, there are 4.1 people of working age for every school-age child. In the developing world, there are 23 people. The added strain on the economically active members of developing countries contributes to economic underdevelopment and overloads social programmes. The key is to focus on limiting the number of children born to those young people who have just entered or are about to enter their reproductive years. This requires:-

- Improving the legal, social and cultural statuses of the girl child;
- Extending family planning coverage to previously neglected groups, in particular teenagers and young newly-weds;
- Postponing age at first marriage;
- Integrating education in population and family life into formal and non-formal curricula;
- Developing information, education and communication programmes on the importance of postponing the birth of the first child and lengthening the space between subsequent births;
- Creating income-generating activities for both male and female young people;
- Expanding the outreach of non-formal education and literacy programmes.

Improving health care and extending family planning services

One of the keys to reducing population growth and improving the health of mothers and children is a strong and determined family planning programme. Lessons learned from highly successful programmes in Asian countries indicate that delaying and spacing births contributes to higher rates of infant survival; better all-round health for mothers and children; cleaner, safer living conditions; and a better life for the whole family. Successful family planning programmes also benefit the community. The importance of family planning as both a health measure and a means to reduce population growth is all the more pronounced when viewed in the context of current and projected

unmet needs for the 1990s. Meeting these needs will require:-

- Further integrating family planning with maternal and child health care and other sectoral activities;
- Making high quality services as widely available and easily accessible as possible to both women and men;
- Providing the widest possible choice of family planning methods, thereby enabling couples to select the method best suited to their needs;
- Ensuring the active participation of community leaders and trusted local figures concerning the choice of services and methods, as well as in the delivery of supplies and the evaluation of programmes;
- Enhancing access to family planning by bringing services closer to users, including integration of family planning into primary health care networks at the village level; Making every effort to ensure high quality of services, supplies and counselling.

CALL TO ACTION

THE CONFERENCE CALLS ON:

1. Parliamentarians of Asia

To redouble their efforts to increase awareness and promote greater understanding among Parliamentarians, Government officials and the public of the interrelationship between population and development and to strengthen their role as the crucial link between government and the people, in particular as a channel of communication for the articulation of the people's needs;

To take appropriate initiatives, including legislative measures, in support of this Declaration's Programme of Action, in particular those measures concerned with improving the legal, social, economic and cultural status of women;

To enlist the active participation of local voluntary organizations in spreading family planning messages and information and of all religious and spiritual leaders in supporting population policies and programmes;

To help organize formal as well as informal discussions on major issues and proposed policies between concerned government officials, leaders of NGOs and the community at large with a view to reaching a consensus on national and local needs and priorities;

To promote further awareness of population and related issues through upcoming events such as the Asia and Pacific population conference (1992) and the International Meeting on Population (1994).

2. Governments

To allocate, especially by reducing armaments on the basis of avoiding internal and external conflicts, an adequate share of national resources to implement the Programme of Action and to meet the needs of family planning and other programmes that have a bearing on population;

To make every effort to increase their financial contributions to the international population assistance programmes, in particular to the UNFPA programme, in order to help solve population problems in developing countries;

To increase their political commitment to population policies and programmes, in consonance with national development priorities;

To develop integrated population, environmental and social programmes aimed at balancing population growth, resource use, and economic and social development;

To translate national population policy and programme goals into community action;

To enlist the support of non-governmental organizations and community groups in helping to extend the outreach of population and family planning programmes, in particular to audiences and target groups still relatively unserved;

To strive to improve the role and status of women in all spheres of life and to ensure that women actively participate in and benefit from all population and development activities;

To increase the enrolment of girls in primary and secondary schools, with a view to achieving universal female enrolment in primary school by the year 2000;

To integrate population education into formal and informal school curricula;

To provide adequate public funding for research on socio-cultural attitudes towards contraception and fertility change and the factors and circumstances that influence changes in values and outlook concerning family size and make-up;

To devise comprehensive policies to reduce rural-to-urban migration and improve the standard of living of less privileged urban dwellers;

To strive to achieve the population goals and objectives as enunciated by the Amsterdam Declaration.

3. Non-Governmental Organizations

To encourage and enlist the support of non-governmental organizations to undertake action at all levels and particularly at the community level to stimulate people's participation in adopting family planning and the small family norm, and in undertaking development activities to improve the quality of life;

To utilize existing NGO national and local networks to further extend family planning services at the

grassroots level.

4. Press and Media

To encourage and promote public participation in population and family planning programmes;

To create awareness of the importance of population and related issues in social and economic development;

To provide positive and constructive coverage of population activities.

5. International Community

To increase financial resources for multilateral and bilateral organizations, especially UNFPA, to enable them to meet increasing demand for population assistance in the Asian region;

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

To enhance the co-ordination of population activities not only between donors and national governments but among donors as well;

To develop strategic plans for international population assistance, both to complement and supplement national strategies and to better determine aid priorities, harmonize procedures and define the roles of the various donors;

To strengthen and systematize monitoring and evaluation procedures of population programmes and projects;

To facilitate the transfer of scientific knowledge and technical information about contraceptives and family planning to developing countries.

6. Asian Forum Secretariat

To promote regular exchange of information and expertise among Parliamentarians and others with a view to enhancing the quality and impact of population and family planning programmes in the region.

REDEDICATION

We, the Parliamentarians at the Third Conference of the Asian Forum, in our various capacities as

legislators, community leaders and representatives of the people, commit and dedicate ourselves to work untiringly to bring about a balanced development combining population reduction, respect for human rights, social progress, concern for the environment and economic development We therefore pledge to support policies and programmes aimed at improving mother and child care and the general level of people's health, promoting rational growth of population, solving the problems of urbanization and migration, providing for the security of the aged, addressing the special needs of youth, and safeguarding the environment and ecological balance.

To this end, we rededicate ourselves to the successful implementation of the Programme of Action in the hope of securing a better harmony between population growth, socio-economic development, resource use and environmental protection. We further dedicate ourselves to work for a better and peaceful future for humankind as a whole.