

KUALA LUMPUR DECLARATION October 1993

PREAMBLE

1. We, the Parliamentarians from 22 countries of Asia attending the Fourth General Assembly of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 26-28 October 1993, in addressing ourselves to the issues related to population and development:

- Recall the New Delhi (1984), Beijing (1987) and Bangkok (1990) Declarations of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development;
- Take note of the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development, adopted at the Fourth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in Bali, Indonesia, in August 1992 as part of the preparatory process of the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo, Egypt, in September 1994;
- Appreciate the goals adopted in the Declaration to attain replacement level fertility (equivalent to 2.2 children per women) by the year 2010 or sooner to reduce the level of infant mortality to 40 per 1,000 live births or lower during the same period, and to reduce maternal mortality by at least half by the year 2010 in countries and areas in which maternal mortality is high;
- Agree with the Declaration that population factors play a decisive role in safeguarding the environment and in pursuing sustainable development and that, accordingly, population considerations must be fully integrated into all aspects of planning and policy making;
- Agree also that sustainable development as a means to ensure human well being, equitably shared by all people today and in the future, requires that the interrelationships between population, resources, the environment and development should be fully recognized, properly managed and brought into a harmonious, dynamic balance;
- Acknowledge that countries should formulate enforceable measures to promote greater harmony between population, resources, environment and development so as to achieve improved quality of life on a sustainable basis;
- Reiterate that every country has its own specific array of population problems and policy objectives and has the sovereign right to pursue its own population goals, policies and programmes with regard to the goal of global sustainable development;
- Recognize that in showing concern for human well-being, population policies should recognize that individuals are members of the family, community, society, State and global community, and they possess rights within those contexts;
- Recognize that poverty intensifies the imbalance between population, resources,

environment and development;

- Recognize further that the best way to achieve a balance between population, resources, environment and development is to adopt an integrated strategy that harmonizes efforts to slow population growth, rationalize population distribution, alleviate poverty, and lessen environmentally dangerous consumption patterns;
- Acknowledge that family planning is one of the most cost-effective and efficient investments a society can make in social and economic development and therefore emphasize that it must be an integral component of any such integrated strategy;
- Recognize the need, therefore, to promote and support maternal and child health and more concentrated efforts to accelerate the acceptance and improve the quality, accessibility and availability of family planning services;
- Emphasize that women must play a central role and fully participate in all decision making relating to population and sustainable development;
- Emphasize also that international cooperation in the fields of population and development is essential and that no political conditions should be attached to the contributions and assistance made by the international communities in these fields.

Demographic situation

2. In 1992, the population of Asia was 3.2 billion, or approximately 59 per cent of the world's population. Six of the 10 most populous countries in the world were in Asia, including the two largest, China and India, which together accounted for 38 per cent of the world's population. The population of the region is projected to reach 3.7 billion by the year 2000 and to pass 4 billion some time in 2006. Although the rate of growth is expected to decline over the next two decades, from its current level of 1.8 per cent a year to 1.3 percent, approximately 1 billion people will be added to the region between now and the year 2010. Well over half of this increase will take place in Southern Asia, which will surpass Eastern Asia as the most populous subregion in Asia.
3. Less than one third of Asians live in cities. Yet, the region is in the midst of an urban revolution. In 1990, the less-developed countries of the region had more urban residents than any other area in the world - 879 million persons. This constituted 63 per cent of the urban population in less-developed regions and 39 per cent of the world urban population. The number of urban dwellers in Asia is expected to triple by the year 2025, to 2.5 billion. At present, 7 of the world's 13 largest urban agglomerations are in Asia: Tokyo, Shanghai, Bombay, Seoul, Beijing, Calcutta, and Osaka. Another three - Jakarta, Tianjin and Metro Manila - will be added to the

list in 1994. Moreover, 14 of the 26 largest urban agglomerations projected for 2010 will be in Asia.

Population, environment and development

4. Development cannot be sustained if it destroys the earth's natural resource base in the process. Nor can it be sustained if population continues to grow at its current rate and if patterns of consumption and resource use remain unchanged.

5. The situation is magnified by deepening poverty, the prime causes of which are landlessness and lack of opportunities for work. In rural areas, poverty is concentrated in households that have either no land or insufficient land and whose income is not enough to lift them out of poverty. In urban areas, the poor tend to hold unstable, low-paying jobs, usually in the informal sector.

6. Such conditions are made worse by rapid population growth and by rural-to-urban and rural-to-rural migration, all of which are closely interlinked. Rapid urbanization eats up surrounding cropland and chews up prime agricultural land. This, in turn, induces farmers to overuse or even exhaust the soil and drives rural migrants to ecologically fragile frontier zones or to the more accessible areas, such as those close to roads or along coastlines. The resulting increase in population densities in these areas creates greater pressure on migrants to intensify cultivation, increase harvests of forest products and expand settlements to remote and steeper locations.

Family planning, reproductive health and the status of women

7. Family planning ensures that all couples and individuals can decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children. The impact of family planning is enhanced when provided as part of a larger, integrated package of social, health, welfare and economic measures that seek to alleviate poverty; improve overall health care, especially reproductive health care; improve the quality of and ensure equal access to education, in particular that of girls; and promote the role and status of women, both in society and in the development process.

8. There is a multiplier effect when effective family planning programmes are introduced along with legal, social and economic measures that make them accessible, acceptable and affordable. Such programmes must promote the full and equal participation of all men and women on a voluntary and responsible basis.

9. It is estimated that between 25 and 40 per cent of maternal deaths could be prevented if women could choose to avoid unwanted and poorly planned pregnancies. But family planning services, and women's health care more generally, have typically been given low priority in national expenditures. Part of the problem is that women are consigned to subordinate positions in countries where their status is low and where child-bearing is considered a major part of their social, function.

10. Equal treatment under the law reinforces respect for women as equals. It also reinforces women's self-respect and widens their reproductive choices. Sex discrimination starts early in life with society's preference for sons. But girls who have been brought up to regard themselves as equal to boys are more likely to adopt family planning as adults. They are also more likely to give equal value to boy and girl children and to understand the importance of their own reproductive health care.

11. As women assume greater responsibility for income provision within the household, men need to share in child care and housework responsibilities in order to relieve the double burden of women.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

12. Four areas require our immediate attention if we are to achieve a sustainable balance between the number of people in Asia and the amount of resources they consume. These are:

- Increasing attention towards the social sectors, in particular to efforts to encourage slower population growth and to improve women's reproductive health;
- A direct and all-out attack on poverty itself;
- A shift to a more balanced rural and urban development;
- A decisive improvement in the status of girls and women, with particular attention to education.

13. Ultimately, sustainable development is about choices and responsibilities - for the individual, the community, the nation and the world. Its aim is to widen our freedom of choice - choice in the matter of family size, choice in population policy and programmes and the many competing demands on limited government resources, and choice in development philosophy and practice.

14. With choice, of course, comes responsibility. Men and women must take responsibility for contraception and parenthood; individuals for their consumption patterns; communities for their

weaker and more vulnerable members; nations for the well-being of their people; and the international community for ensuring the balance between development and environment upon which all else depends.

15. While mindful of the differences in the social, economic and political conditions in the countries of Asia and respectful of the national sovereignty of each country, we parliamentarians, in our dual capacity as legislators and community leaders, pledge to develop national legislative agenda and mobilize governmental and public support for the recommendations set forth in this Programme of Action.

Investing in family planning programmes

16. The most cost-effective and efficient means of slowing population growth and reducing fertility is to invest in strong and determined family planning programmes. In fact, permanent declines in fertility can be realized only through widespread, voluntary use of family planning services and information. Strong family planning programmes have a significant effect at any stage of a country's development. Whatever their income or education, couples choose smaller families when they have access to adequate and appropriate family planning information and services. To be effective, family planning programmes must have the full support and commitment of the government and be part of a well-coordinated, integrated national strategy that:

- bring information and services close to the people they serve;
- place strong emphasis on upgrading the quality of services and providing a wide variety of methods;
- make greater use of women-oriented and women-managed facilities;
- employ fresh and innovative ways to involve men, young people and newlyweds, and to reach young women in the workplace;
- fully integrate services into all health services, particularly primary health care;
- encourage community-oriented approaches in addition to traditional individual oriented approaches, particularly in South Asia;
- enhance cooperative efforts among the government, non-government and private sectors so as to maximize the synergistic effects of their comparative advantages;
- emphasize the benefits of birth spacing, particularly among young women.

Enhancing reproductive choices and maternal and child health care

17. All men and women have reproductive choices, rights, and responsibilities, as well as the right to

receive adequate and appropriate reproductive health care. Reproductive rights carry with them reproductive responsibilities, including that of responsible family planning and parenthood, to be shared equally by both men and women. Societies, too, have the responsibility to create a legal, social, economic, cultural and political environment conducive to and supportive of free and informed choice regarding the number and spacing of one's children. This requires, among other things,

- recognizing that gender roles are diverse and changing;
- acknowledging the practical reality of unequal authority and power in gender relationships and taking concrete steps to address those inequalities;
- encouraging the active involvement of men in all aspects of family responsibilities, including family planning, child-rearing and housework;
- adopting measures to promote and protect adolescent reproductive health;
- giving increasing attention to the neglected tragedy of maternal mortality;
- recognizing unsafe abortion as a major and needed public health issue;
- providing effective and universal maternal and child health and family planning services as an integral part of reproductive health care;
- formulating policies and programmes that address the totality of maternal and child health and reproductive health care, including efforts to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity, reduced abortion, infertility and sexually transmitted diseases and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Empowering women

18. Empowering women means according them equal status with men. It means giving women equal opportunity in all occupations and in all sectors, assuring them the same conditions of work as men, receiving equal pay for equal work, and sharing household responsibilities equally among women and men. Parliamentarians have a particularly crucial role to play in this sensitive area, working through their national legislatures to:

- strengthen women's access to productive and remunerative employment;
- protect women from all forms of discrimination, including economic discrimination, and all forms of violence;
- remove all remaining legal, administrative and social barriers to women's rights and economic independence, including the right to own property and obtain credit;
- establish and enforce laws guaranteeing equal employment and equal pay for equal work;
- incorporate gender considerations in all aspects of development planning;
- formulate policies and programmes that promote the status, equality and wellbeing of the

girl child and that instil in the boy child behavioural norms and values consistent with gender equality.

Balancing rural and urban growth

19. Urbanization is inevitable, and irreversible. Millions of the world's poorest people migrate to towns and cities each year in search of work and a better life. Many are driven by poverty, high fertility and environmental degradation. Others seek the benefits of development policies that favour urban and export markets. The results have been the rise of mega-cities, with large numbers of unemployed and underemployed migrants living in slums and settlements, and the decline of the rural sector and its contribution to national economics. Among the measures needed to address this situation are to:

- develop national policies that seek to balance rural and urban growth, rather than restrict rural-to-urban migration;
- strengthen economic and institutional links between urban centres and their surrounding areas;
- develop the capacity of and decentralize authority to municipal governments to plan and manage urban development;
- improve the income-earning capacity of migrants working in the informal sector through vocational training and access to credit schemes;
- improve and expand basic social and health infrastructure and services, including maternal and child health and family planning services, in both rural and urban areas;
- encourage and facilitate private-sector investment in smaller towns and cities.

Alleviating poverty

20. Widespread poverty poses a major challenge to population and development efforts. It is often accompanied by ignorance and illiteracy, low status of women and limited access to health and family planning services, all of which contribute to high levels of fertility, morbidity and mortality. The vicious cycle of large family size and persistent poverty also contributes to environmental degradation and resource depletion.

21. The all-out attack on poverty, therefore, must be an integral part of a larger effort to slow population growth, expand economic opportunities for the poor and disadvantaged and meet the basic health, education and social needs of poor people. This has to be accompanied by, and interact with, effective family planning programmes and job-producing environmental activities such as

agro-forestry, reforestation and terracing.

Providing security for the aged

22. The steady increase in the number and proportion of elderly people in national populations presents both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity is that the majority of elderly have considerable potential for contributing to their families and communities. The challenge is to provide health care, social, economic and psychological security for Asia's ageing population, which finds itself having to adapt to a rapidly changing world increasingly characterized by high social mobility and dispersed families. Among the measures needed to meet this challenge are to:

- formulate comprehensive, long-term development strategies that specifically take into account the social and economic implications of population ageing;
- enact legislation to protect the employment and pension rights of the elderly, provide free or low-cost medical care and ensure access to free and low-cost housing;
- extend the age of mandatory retirement and create work opportunities for those who wish to work after retirement, accompanied by specialized training programmes;
- develop programmes at the local level to bring the active elderly into mainstream social and economic activities;
- create awareness and understanding of the issues of ageing, especially among youth, and educate the young as to the importance, for both the individual and society, of caring for the elderly relatives.

Mobilizing resources: National action and international cooperation

23. A programme of action, regardless of how comprehensive and ambitious, is only as good as the resources that are available for implementing it. The key to providing such resources - human, technical and financial - is political will and commitment – the commitment to adopt integrated population, environment and development policies and programmes, and the will to translate this commitment into action.

24. Such will and commitment must be present at all levels and draw upon the inputs of all sectors - governmental, non-governmental and private. Nations must develop national policies and programmes as part of their overall development strategies, increasing budgetary provisions to social sectors and providing the requisite human resources to implement them. Through South-South cooperation, the countries of the various developing regions must share their valuable experience, knowledge and technical expertise with one another; allocating the requisite resources - human and

financial - to do so. Such exchange will greatly help countries that are still in the process of attaining their demographic goals and objectives.

25. Mobilizing the additional financial resources needed to support population programmes world-wide requires the strong support of the international community. Such resources could be mobilized if donor countries were to allocate 4 percent of official development assistance to population programmes. The most appropriate mechanism through which to channel this assistance would be the United Nations system, and most notably the United Nations Population Fund. Other United Nations organizations, international agencies and nongovernmental organizations, in particular the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), should support the implementation of population policies and programmes.

CALL TO ACTION

THE CONFERENCE CALLS ON:

1. Parliamentarians of Asia

To promote greater awareness and understanding among Parliamentarians, government officials and the public of the complex interrelationship between population and sustainable development;

To take appropriate initiatives, including legislative measures, in support of this Declaration's Programme of Action, in particular those measures concerned with empowering women and improving maternal and child health and reproductive health care;

To use their good offices to encourage regular exchanges between governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and to promote government collaboration and use of NGOs on the development of innovative programmes;

To encourage their national legislatures to endorse the population goals enunciated in the Bali Declaration and to promote and support national legislation that would facilitate achieving those goals.

2. Governments

To allocate an adequate share of national resources to promote and support activities aimed at achieving an effective and integrated approach to population, environment and development problems, and in particular to family planning and reproductive health care;

To develop long-term plans with the goal of making national population programmes self-reliant; To include efforts to reduce population growth as an integral component of national strategies to alleviate poverty;

To develop integrated population, environment and social programmes aimed at balancing population growth, resource use, and economic and social development with an integrated approach which incorporates an ethical dimension stressing respect for others, non-violence, cooperation and elimination of wasteful consumption;

To remove all remaining legal, administrative, economic and social barriers to women's rights and economic independence;

To develop national policies that seek to balance rural and urban development, in particular by improving and expanding basic health and social infrastructure and services, including maternal and child health and family planning services; To develop plans to ensure the provision of adequate care of the aged; To strive to achieve the population goals adopted in the Bali Declaration.

3. Non-Governmental Organizations

To continue to support national population programmes through their grassroots networks and strategies based on community participation;

To initiate and promote regular exchanges with government counterpart organizations, particularly in the area of family planning service delivery.

4. Press and Media

To create awareness of the complex interrelationship between population, environment, resources and development;

To provide positive and constructive coverage of population issues, in particular in the context of the upcoming International Conference on Population and Development.

5. International Community

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

To encourage all United Nations agencies and organizations to support population policies and programmes;

To seek debt reduction initiatives designed specifically to generate resources for maternal and child

health, reproductive health and family planning programmes and for the improvement of the status of women;

To promote South-South cooperation in population programme experience;

To support national family planning programmes through the transfer of scientific knowledge and technical information about contraception;

To encourage and support activities designed to strengthen and expand the capacity of developing countries to plan, develop and implement national population policies and programmes, in particular training and management programmes;

To work closely with other donors in order to reduce duplication of effort, identify and expand successful programmes, and ensure the effectiveness and co-ordinated use of international cooperation;

To establish guidelines and recommendations for assistance levels as proportions of gross national product and official development assistance.

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 Fourth General Assembly 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 truly sustainable development combining efforts to slow population growth, rationalize population distribution, alleviate poverty, and lessen environmentally dangerous consumption patterns. We therefore pledge to support policies and programmes aimed at investing in family planning programmes, enhancing maternal and child health care and reproductive health care, empowering women, balancing rural and urban growth, alleviating poverty, providing security for the aged and mobilizing resources.

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.