

ULAANBAATAR DECLARATION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Preamble

We, the Parliamentarians from the Commonwealth Independent States (CIS) and Far East Asian countries, meeting in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 1-3 August, 1999, at the Sub-Regional Parliamentarian Meeting of CIS and Far East Asian Countries, to discuss the issues of population and development, issue the following declaration:

We reaffirm our commitment to work for achieving the aims and goals of the International conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (POA). We endorse and fully support The Hague Declaration of Parliamentarians on the ICPD Review. We reaffirm that without addressing the interrelationships between population, environment, food security, and sustainable development, we will not be able to meet the sub-regional population and development challenges.

Our countries have a lot in common, but are also different in many respects. However, to achieve sustainable development, it is essential in all our countries to have a long term perspective on population and development, including on reproductive health/rights, gender, violence against women, food security, environment, adolescent, youth and elderly, at the sub-regional level. These perspectives need to be adapted to each specific national situation.

We, the Parliamentarians of the CIS and Far East Asian Countries, urge our governments to develop long term strategies to address the population and development issues in the sub-region, and fully support their timely implementation. We also urge the international community to assist us in such a critical task.

Our countries have very different situations in terms of population and development, but most have faced a very challenging recent past either because of the economic transition to the market economy, or because of the economic crisis. In many of our countries, the implementation of the ICPD POA is taking place in the context of profound reforms. In many countries, the institutional as well as the legal framework related to population and development, and reproductive health, are under review and changes. Given the economic difficulties, there is an enormous challenge to increase access to and improve the quality of care while carrying reforms which call for reduced costs and

cost-effectiveness. The socio-economic and political transition that many of our countries are experiencing brings about opportunities to further integrate population into development planning.

Issues: Each country has its own population dynamics and need to address this in relation to its development. In some countries, the major challenge is to reduce fertility, whereas in others, fertility has already decreased and efforts are focussed on reducing the mortality rates. Migration is also an important issue for some countries: it needs to be better understood and taken into account in sub-national development strategies. In countries where fertility rates have been decreasing, aging is an increasingly important issue to address. Given the rapidly evolving economic context in which the CIS and the Far East countries, it is necessary to develop long-term perspectives and strategies to address adequately the population and development balance.

Action: We, the Parliamentarians, believe that challenges are great but opportunities even greater in this transition period to ensure that the ICPD approach is integrated in the reforms and transformations our socio-economic and political systems are going through. We need to make, and encourage, more efforts to link population and development, and to increase access and improve the quality of reproductive health services. We, the Parliamentarians, urge our respective Governments and other partners in development to work together in developing and implementing comprehensive long term strategies to address population and development issues, including reproductive health.

Issues: Concerted efforts are needed to ensure access to quality reproductive health information, counseling and services. In times of transition or economic difficulties, the disadvantaged populations are often those suffering the most. Attention needs to be given to ensuring that services are provided to all, so that each individual can exercise her or his reproductive rights, including the poor, the minorities, and the adolescents. The youth of today represents our future, and we need to give them the tools to have a healthy and productive life – urgent attention is needed to ensure that the specific needs of adolescents are addressed. In many countries, improvement of the quality of reproductive health would reduce significantly the high rates of maternal and infant mortality as well as the high prevalence of abortions and of sexually transmitted diseases thus improving the quality of life of our populations.

Action: We, the Parliamentarians, need to promote and monitor equal access to quality reproductive health services, by all including the adolescents.

Issues: Of great concern is the rapid spread of STD/HIV/AIDS in our sub-region, the potential

terrible consequences on the fabric of our populations and countries, and the costs associated with inadequate prevention. Our countries are experiencing different stages of the pandemic, but we all agree on the crucial importance of acting now in preventing further spread of the infection, in particular with the youth.

Action: We, the Parliamentarians, will encourage all partners in development, at all levels, to act immediately, in a coordinated and concerted effort, to prevent the further spread of STD/HIV/AIDS, giving very special attention to adolescents and young people.

Issues: The transition and recent economic development have exacerbated some gender inequalities or have stimulated the emergence of new issues with regards to gender equity. Equal access to education and work, elimination of violence against women are among the priority issues in this area.

Action: We, the Parliamentarians, need to promote better understanding of the gender dynamics and to promote concerted interventions to ensure full participation in, and equal access to the benefit of development for both women and men. We need to monitor the situation and the trends, and encourage our respective governments to take the necessary actions, including the establishment of a positive legal environment.

Issues: We recognize that we have rich natural resources, however, they might not be sufficient to sustain large populations, given the too often unsustainable manner with which we have been using our resources, and our particularly severe environmental conditions. Development strategies need to include proper use of resources, and an analysis of the implications of our developmental activities on the environment. We recognized the importance of maintaining our traditional food production and food supply systems. Equally important is the provision of appropriate storage and distribution systems. We strongly believe that food security is imperative for peace and stability.

Action: **We, the Parliamentarians, strongly urge the international community to ensure that that the international trade be fully consistent with the long-term perspective of population and food security.**

Commitment

We, the Parliamentarians of the CIS and Far East Asian Countries strongly believe in the importance of the issues discussed above, and we commit ourselves to advocate them both at the grass-roots

level, with our constituencies, and at the highest political level in our countries, so that a concerted effort is done, at all levels and with all partners, including the international communities, the NGOs and the communities themselves, in implementing the necessary actions.

We, the Parliamentarians of the CIS and Far East Asian Countries believe in peace and respect of human rights, including reproductive health rights. It is only in such environment that development can take place. We urge all governments to adhere to all international conventions promoting the respect of human rights and peace, and to resolve problems in a peaceful manner. Together, we should aim at providing a peaceful life and security to all human beings.