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AS WRITTEN

PRESIDENT

MUHAMMAD HOSNI MUBARAK

Address

before

the Inaugural session

of the International Conference

on

Population and Development

Cairo, Sept. 5 , 1994

Your Excellencies Heads of State
and Government,

The United Nations Secretary

General,

Heads and Members of

Delegations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the good earth of Egypt, the cradle of civilization and the land of peace, which has played through the ages a major role in linking the civilizations and peoples of the entire world. It has enriched the march of mankind with a blend of human values brought about by the amalgamation of civilizations on this immortal land throughout seven thousand year

Welcome to Cairo . the metropolis of the Arabs and Africans the city of a thousand minarets that join in an embrace the lowers of churches, the minarets of Islam and spreading love and tolerance and brightening with the light Of faith the Egyptian's endeavours in this blessed valley mentioned in the verses of the Qura'n, the words of the Bible and the texts of the Torah.

Welcome to the land which has taken part in the march towards human progress when man started to cultivate the land, called for monotheism, registered his knowledge and history, made of his relation with the River Nile a unique model of congeniality between man and his environment, and embodied the right relationship between population and resources.

Welcome to today's Egypt, that contributes as much as possible to the human struggle for a future more secure and peaceful where justice and equality prevail.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your decision to chose Egypt as a seat for the convocation of this important international conference is highly appreciated by the Egyptian people. They consider it an expression of gratitude from the world community and the United Nations for Egypt's role in serving the causes of peace. development and progress.

We hope that the convocation of this conference in Egypt would be a turning point that takes into consideration the unity of man's destiny on our planet. No matter how far apart we may live or how vast the difference in progress among us is we eventually share the same destiny. and face the same challenges of an ever-increasing violence and ferocity) in the world at large.

The world has become not only a small village due to the fascinating progress in means of communications but is also a small village because the dangers threatening us have become of a cosmic nature that overruns all borders of nations and continents that no society can be totally safe from their consequences.

As we are on the threshold of the twenty-first century we hope that our conference would be a meeting point of détente among man's civilizations and that man would be attuned to his environment. we also hope that this conference would be a bridge linking north with south and east with west . It would coordinate the efforts of all in a human

entente that maintains peace and human values and preserves the principles of heavenly laws which differentiate between good and evil, and what is right and what is wrong.

We would like this conference to be a historic turning point in the annals of human coordinated endeavour in order to confront the challenges of a new era that brings us great expectations of a more secure and just world as much as it carries serious dangers that are difficult to face . Such dangers may stem from a one - sided outlook on the destiny of mankind overlooking the fact that we are all in one boat and that human progress should be comprehensive. Such an outlook would create an unbalanced world structure lacking the elements of social stability

Demographical facts at present affirm that the smallest number of the worlds population live in countries of high income per capita where the average income of 822 million people is more than twenty thousand dollars annually while the average income of three billion people does not exceed 350 dollars. These are cramped in countries suffering from insufficient resources poor production and the absence of means of human development. Indications are that 15% of the worlds population earn 75% of world income .

These figures pose many important questions which cause much concern and call for joint action in a bid to change this image through more cooperation among world communities and a greater capability to confront future challenges .

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We do not wish that this would be merely a third population conference that would only add to the achievements of the two previous conferences which were held in Bucharest and Mexico in 1974 and 1984 respectively achievements of which we cannot underrate .

However, we wish this conference to be a historic turning point in envisaging the population problem and putting it in its proper perspective. We are all partners at work and share the same destiny on this planet which faces unprecedented challenges brought about; by the huge and quick changes that took place during the latter half of this century and precipitated the population expansion problems .

The importance of this conference lies in the fact that it is held in a new world climate where humanity has great hopes of a possibly different world order, where peace, justice and cooperation prevail despite the bloody miseries we still witness at present and the apprehensions of many peoples of being marginalised away from the procession of human progress due to the absence of the criterion of justice .

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to state in several important points my vision of the tasks of this conference and the goals it should seek to realize. Though it is a personal vision yet it reflects the aspirations of many peoples that have great hopes in this conference. The conference takes place at a decisive stage that makes it incumbent upon all of us all to exert much effort and thought within the context of our clear sincere understanding of the fact that we all share one destiny and one future:

First:

The task of our conference at this important juncture in the history of human progress is to respond to the peoples' hopes, to reach a joint vision that consolidates the march of human progress and firmly establishes the concepts of peace, justice, cooperation, and values work and virtues. Perhaps the right starting point in formulating this joint human vision is to admit that the results and recommendations of the conference must be an outcome of that which is going on of free discussion and open dialogue, away from any strict commitment to any ready-made formulas that have not been considered or discussed at the conference.

In my opinion the outcome and objectives of the conference are defined by a creative interaction of the various opinions through a free dialogue that aims at finding a common denominator among all the different views. Thus the conference recommendations would be a reflection of humanity as a whole realizing justice and equal opportunities every country and people no matter how small its census or its resources are.

This conference combines peoples of different civilizations, cultures, and heavenly messages whose laws should be respected. Hence there is no other way but an interaction of opinions in an atmosphere of democracy in a bid to find a common denominator that unites us within this rich miscellaneous gathering.

Second:

Reaching this common denominator calls for free dialogue ruled by a spirit of solidarity, the joint feeling of responsibility, and the mutual keenness to open up to the opinions of others, and to maintain that no one alone can claim that he exploits the whole facts . Our dialogue should be a matter of give and take that reflects the interrelation between cultures. To miss the objective and lose the course of action is of a greater danger because dialogue will be confined to premeditated thoughts that some wish to impose on every body. Dialogue may also fall victim to strong polarisation between advanced and developing states to the extent that we find ourselves in a labyrinth of serious discrepancies. Eventually our efforts will be dispersed and our unity shattered and we become incapable of confronting ferocious dangers which jeopardize the entire human existence.

Third:

We deeply believe that there are no discrepancies between religion and science between spiritual and material factors, between the requirements of modernization and originality because life depends on a combination of all these factors. Man cannot realize peace, security and happiness with out a balanced satisfaction of his spiritual and material needs.

Fourth:

Any recommendation issued by the conference should be at the service of every society according to its circumstances and basic beliefs. They should in keeping with its heavenly laws and religious principles and compatible with the philosophy which governs its outlook.

In this respect, I would like to refer to the UN Economic and

Social Council's Resolution No. 1991 of 1993 which stipulates the necessity of respecting the sovereignty of each state and its right to draw up and apply the demographic policies that are in conformity with its culture, values and traditions, and compatible with its social economic and political conditions, and in harmony with human rights and the responsibility of individuals, families and societies.

Fifth:

It will be useless to consider the Cairo conference as a separate event disconnected from many intentional endeavours exerted in the past or will be exerted in the future to discuss other aspects of the problems of our life. For example, the Environment and Development Summit Conference of 1992 as well as the coming summit conferences on social development, women and human settlements.

All these international efforts should be placed within one framework, for the problems of our planet have become so complicated and interrelated so much that they necessitate an integrated developed vision which helps working out the right solutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It may be sufficient to refer to some important facts in order to realize the difficult situations which our world undergoes. 5,5 billion people live on our planet. This number is increased by 90 million every year. Three quarters of this number live in the developing countries whose share of the world income is only 15% which makes matters more complicated.

International statistics point out that there are 500 million unemployed persons in these countries suffering from the absence of job opportunities. What is more dangerous is that unemployment separates them from the social life of their societies . and this is the worst and most destructive outcome of unemployment .

Most of these countries are gravely affected by the problems of debts and their burdens particularly in Africa of which foreign debts have reached \$285 billion. Many are also suffering from shortage of food because of drought desertification .

In such developing communities half a million women die every year due to causes related to pregnancy . Such a rate is 200 times as much as the possibilities of European women's exposure to the same danger .

All these phenomena call for intensifying the efforts exerted to deal with the population issue and control overpopulation in conformity with divine laws and religious values, hoping to reach reasonable growth rates that are in keeping with resources in a bid to attain a better future for the coming generations

It is a joint responsibility of the whole world, the rich before the poor; not only because we live in one world and our duty is integration and cooperation, or that some of the causes of these problems are due to the absence of criteria of justice in their dealings with the advanced world, but there is also a third reason, may be the most serious threat to our planet , were the negative impacts of the problems of overpopulation exceed all limits, with the increasing risks of immigration, violence, epidemics, in addition to the continuous deterioration of environment and its negative effects on all

The population problem facing our present world cannot be correctly solved on the basis of handling the demographic dimensions only, but also should be dealt with within its close relation to the problems of social, economic and cultural development which aim at raising the individual's capacities and participation in production and consumption

All that should be done within an accurate concept of the nature of the relation between population and resources; that takes into consideration the requirements of the coming generations as well as the necessities of providing the needs of the present

The honest translation of this integrated vision of the dimensions of the population problem necessitates intensifying the efforts we exert to upgrade educational and health services and pay more attention to women who play a major role in forming a family, raising children and also bears a bigger responsibility in implementing the programmes relevant to population

The cornerstone and starting point in any successful demographic policies aiming at establishing a society capable of waging the battle of development battle with efficiency, is working on improving women's conditions, especially, in the developing countries, raising awareness of the gravity of the problem and revealing to them all the various dimensions

Ladies and gentlemen

Heads of State and Governments and Delegations.

Egypt experienced a grave population problem in the mid-20th Century due to a continuous drop in mortality rates together with stabilized-higher birth rates as a result of sustainable development of health services early in - the 20th Century, Egypt's population doubled over a quarter of a century after that in half a century .

This has been exhausting revenues of development and threatening standards of living that necessitated more services with limited resources . We could neither meet the growing aspirations of the masses to a better life nor cope with the demographic growth at a rate that exceeded the highest worldwide

This phenomenon has more aggravating aspects due to the concentration of population in a limited area of Egypt's land; the Nile Valley and the Delta which is conducive to inconceivable demographic density levels.

Naturally, this issue has been given great attention by the State and the society and topped the agenda of national priorities . Official and popular institutions exert concerted efforts in this domain with a view to reaching a plausible formula for solving the problem, to be accepted by the people in their entirety and in which each and every citizen has full confidence

This formula should be in line with religious beliefs and values in order to arouse enthusiasm for voluntary participation to materialize it without compulsion.

The Egyptian population programme succeeded in materializing its objectives for it relied on acquainting the masses with the bare facts, believing that they are capable of performing their required role as

long as they are armed with knowledge and consciousness. Knowing the truth is the first step that motivates the masses to participate and allows for a sound choice stemming from the masses' conviction logically and psychologically.

We rejected all population policies that are based on compulsion or constraint being contradictory to our spiritual values, divine laws, and the essential principles of our Constitution. Besides, compulsion, practically speaking, may impede the progress of population plans and programmes as long as they are not accepted by the people even though they temporarily succeed at the beginning of implementation. Policies as such are impossible to be implemented except in non-democratic communities where compulsion and fear prevail and never help to build a good citizen capable of effective participation

We refused to have recourse to any sort of legislation that may constitute a restriction on the citizens' freedom in taking their decision, or coerce them to take certain procedures for family planning. We have refused all that, for we are positive that in family issues, choice must be free and stemming from free will in order to realize success and continuation

We have been quite keen to make our population programme conforming to the established religious values, because we deeply believe that the values of true religion is a strong impetus toward reform as long as intentions are good, tolerance is prevalent, and all of us are keen on content and significance rather than on form and appearance

We have depended, in the first place, on awakening the masses'

awareness of the population problem in Egypt, in its complicated relation with our limited resources, and the citizens' aspirations to a better life.

We have directed all attention to upgrading education throughout Egypt, considering it a major national cause that deserves absolute priority, For upgrading education is the correct starting point in any reform aiming at the establishment of a society capable of facing great challenges.

Now, we are implementing an ambitious programme that deals with all the aspects of the educational issue, starting from the establishment of new and modern schools that offer pupils a good opportunity to practice all their school activities . The programme also aims at the restoration of existing school buildings. and reviewing educational curricula . It also requalifies and trains teachers to be more capable of developing the minds of pupils, and enabling them to deal with scientific facts and their modern evolution.

Furthermore, it aims at forming the pupils' personalities in a manner that promotes their capabilities of conducting creative dialogue that enables them to make good choice .

We have given the same particular attention to promoting health services all over Egypt.

The significance of this step lies in the fact that there are 4000 villages and a considerable number of small population agglomerations .

We had to double the efforts exerted to upgrade health services

reaching every citizen and give special attention to the health of women and children as well as to psychological health .

The outcome of these policies based on knowledge, consciousness and rendering available educational and health services to each and every citizen was an annual drop in population growth from 2.8% in 1980, to 2.2% in 1994. The number of families taking part in family planning programmes rose from 28 % to 50 % of the total number of families both in rural and urban areas.

One of the prominent features of the Egyptian programme is that it has become a national issue supported by all parties and sects . It, further, won a great deal of national consensus where all the citizens and contented irrespective of their religious or sectarian affiliations.

These are promising results proving that we are moving in the correct direction and that we have firm and stable policies that secure the sustainability of reform in the long run, and guarantees the realization of aspired for results because they are based on the free choice of all citizens .

Many friends and major international organizations cooperated sincerely with us, particularly the United Nations and its specialized organs such as the UN Populations Fund, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO besides the governments of some friendly states that contributed to the success of the Egyptian programme . This is to emphasize that cooperation is important with every country devising a national programme that emanates from its reality and circumstances and is compatible with its values and traditions, while, it realizes the countries objectives and is committed to given priorities .

I seize this opportunity to extend thanks and express appreciation to these organizations . I would like to extend special thanks to and provides an ample opportunity for all the parties to participate so that all cultures and view points may interact in order to enrich our common experience.

UN secretary general Dr. Boutros Ghali and Executive Director of UN Populations Fund and Conference Secretary General Dr. Nafis Sadik for the highly-appreciated efforts they have exerted to make a success of the conference and make preparations for this honourable image .

Ladies and Gentlemen

We start work and dialogue in this conference hoping that discussions of the issues tabled will be conducted freely away from personal interests and prejudices, and depending on objectivity and knowledge . We also hope that it will take into consideration the ethical values and religious doctrines and provide an ample opportunity for all the parties to participate so that all cultures and viewpoints may interact to enrich our common experience.

We want our dialogue to avoid dogmatism and fanaticism, for extremist opinions should remain outside the framework of the development of societies, as they lack in unanimity and acceptability at all levels.

I do not believe that we can -- whatever our wisdom and prudence -- may be reach proper solutions for our population problems, unless those solutions will conform to our society meet the basic needs of the masses, and comply with their values and beliefs.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We cannot belittle the dangers besetting our world due to overpopulation. Also we cannot overlook those numerous tragedies which are still witnessed in the world. although the cold war is over; but we will be unfair when looking at this world, if we ignore the prospects of hope that have already appeared, signalling a better tomorrow.

The great achievements materialized by modern science and scientific discoveries, which rapidly appear every day, increase man's ability to face several challenges in the fields of nutrition, substitute materials, environment protection and the improvement of services.

Likewise, there is a growing feeling that man cannot realize himself by satisfying his material needs at the expense of his psychological and spiritual requirements . This feeling gives us hope in new generations capable, by their deep faith of avoiding falling into the abyss and the labyrinth of doubt and aberration.

The most positive developments witnessed by our planet and which greatly have affected the destiny of mankind, are the growing inclination toward peace, and the rejection of the arms race and all types of mass destruction-weapons all over the world.

Today, man is eager for a more peaceful and secure world in order to devote his efforts for the . (30) good of human beings . Hence, calls to settle even the most difficult disputes arc greater, through negotiations, peaceful settlements, and common acceptance of

just solutions, that reflecting a balance of interests of all parties according to the principles of justice and legitimacy.

These are, in my opinion, the most optimistic developments about the future of our world despite the numerous tragedies we still witness in many places. Today, we aspire to a new world more capable of confronting the challenges of the future . A world in which factors of interrelations and cooperation among mankind replace those of enmity and severe conflicts, tolerance to replace extremism and fanaticism in a bid to attain rapprochement among nations and peoples and (31) promote creative competitiveness that enriches the life of the people and safeguard their present and future.

These are legitimate aspirations and not wishful thinking that can be materialized through closing ranks and unity of thought, only if we start working together in a new spirit as we are all in the same boat .

I sincerely pray to God Almighty to protect our march and guide us to success.

May Allah's Peace, Mercy and Blessings be upon you.

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