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AS WRITTEN

ADDRESS OF THE DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC,

TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT,

CAIRO, SEPTEMBER 1994

Mr Chairman, the Secretary-General of the Conference, excellencies,
distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
(ESCAP), it is a great honour for me to address this International
Conference on Population and Development. Not many gatherings are as
important to the future well-being of the community of nations and
mankind as this one, convened here in the famous and historic city of

Cairo.

The Conference gives us a unique opportunity to fortify our resolve to come to grips with the many and varied population and development challenges that we will face during the remainder of this decade and at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Coming from a region that contains well over half of the world's population, I can state emphatically that population issues are of paramount importance to the countries of the region that ESCAP is trying to assist in their development efforts. Our involvement in the field of population can be traced back before the international conferences held at Mexico City and Bucharest to the first intergovernmental conference on this topic, the First Asian Population Conference. It was convened at New Delhi in 1963 under the auspices of ESCAP, then named ECAFE.

That meeting provided countries of Asia and the Pacific, and the rest of the world with a "wake-up call" concerning the urgency and primacy of population issues in the entire development process.

We take a measure of satisfaction that countries of the ESCAP region have led the way in terms of formulating population policies and establishing and implementing population programmes. Over the years, they have adopted the population goals proposed at various regional population conferences, which is a convincing testimony to the beneficial impact that such large-scale meetings have had on changing attitudes about population issues and promoting decisive action to accelerate the process of national development.

Just two years ago, ESCAP joined forces with the United Nations

Population Fund in convening the Fourth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in Bali, Indonesia. The theme of that Conference was "Population and sustainable development: goals and strategies into the twenty-first century". That gathering, which also served as one of the regional preparatory meetings for the present Conference, produced a landmark blueprint for countries of the region to follow entitled the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development.

Mr Chairman, I should like to draw your attention to some of the aspects of the Bali Declaration that may be useful for the deliberations of this Conference. First, with the unanimous adoption of the Declaration, the countries of the Asian and Pacific region constitute the first developing region of the world to have set realistic population goals and targets for their Governments to implement during the next decade. For example, the Declaration urges countries and areas to adopt strategies to attain replacement-level fertility, equivalent to around 2.2 children per woman. They should also strive to reduce the level of infant mortality to 40 per 1,000 live births or lower; where maternal mortality is high, efforts should be made to reduce it by at least half. All of the goals and targets set forth in the Declaration are to be reached by the year 2010. Second, the 67 recommendations of the Declaration are aimed at improving the quality of life of the people in a way that will not jeopardize the environment and the resource base for future generations. It has become patently clear that true development can never be achieved-unless and until people come first in the process of sustainable economic growth.

The Bali Declaration encompasses recommendations ranging from those aimed at helping to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS to those for preventing urbanization and internal and international migration from becoming unmanageable; from those dealing with mortality and morbidity issues to

those involving population ageing; and from issues related to poverty alleviation to those related to population data, research and information.

The Bali Declaration also spells out some of the means for carrying out its recommendations. It calls, for example, for family planning programmes to be integrated into a package of health, education and welfare services, and for the promotion of birthspacing and breast-feeding.

In addition to quantifiable aspects, the Bali Declaration also calls for qualitative measures such as those that will improve the status of women, a key-to sustainable development. - It also strongly links population factors, resources, the environment and sustainable development.

In recognizing the rapid economic growth of many countries of the ESCAP region, the Bali Declaration strongly emphasizes the need for social investment and the development of human resources. It calls for Governments to take steps to enhance the quality of life of people and to push for balanced development, or "economic growth and development with a human face".

I should also add that the Bali Declaration considers resource mobilization to be an important factor in enabling developing countries to remedy some of their persistent population problems. It calls for the allocation of 4 per cent of official development assistance to population programmes. It is our sincere hope that the present Conference will inspire donors to make the commitment that would make such assistance possible. This may well be our last chance to take the steps necessary to ensure a century that will be better than the present

one. Without a firm and generous response, the future will offer only grim, if not terrifying, prospects.

Mr Chairman, I should like to mention that member countries of ESCAP are convinced of the importance of all the aspects I have just described. Not only did the Commission endorse the Bali Declaration at its annual session last year, but it also adopted a resolution urging all its members and associate members to make every effort to incorporate population, environment and development concerns in their inputs to the Conference.

The course of development, as visualized under the Bali Declaration, has already been achieved in certain parts of the region. The Newly Industrialized Economies of East Asia have / achieved ... achieved a fast export-led expansion, with GNPs in recent decades having grown by as much as 10 per cent each year. Moreover, as East Asian standards of living have increased, total fertility rates have tumbled: in the Republic of Korea from 4.5 in 1965-70 to 2.0 in 1985-90, and in Singapore from 3.5 to 1.7 over the same period. Mortality rates have also dropped; infant mortality rates and average life expectancy levels are close to those of Europe and the United States; and the percentage of couples using contraceptives is much higher than in other parts of the region. In other related areas, such as literacy levels and sanitation services, standards are almost on a par with those of developed countries. Therefore, Mr Chairman, the inevitable question is "If it was possible in East Asia, why not in South Asia and elsewhere in the region, or other regions in the world?"

Even though vigorous national efforts are needed to bring about the achievement of the goals and targets of the Bali Declaration, the role of the United Nations obviously is recognized as an important one. In

areas such as human resources development, technical assistance, research and information dissemination, the ESCAP secretariat hopes to be able to continue to play an important role in inspiring a sense of urgency about population issues while helping the developing countries of the vast Asian and Pacific region to become ever more self-reliant in dealing with their population issues.

From a broad perspective, both the Bali Declaration for the ESCAP region and the Programme of Action that we hope will emerge from this Conference will constitute useful guidelines for developing ... developing countries to follow as the end of the twentieth century approaches.

Mr Chairman, from every perspective in our vision of the future, there is no escaping the fact that population issues are at the heart of balanced and sustainable development. It is hoped that what was begun in New Delhi over 30 years ago will be brought to fruition here in Cairo: that is, the emergence of the political will and the firm commitment-to take the steps that will put us on the road to achieving a better future for our children and grandchildren. There is no acceptable alternative.

Thank you.

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