



94-09-08: Statement of National Audubon Society, Mr. Peter Berle

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AS WRITTEN

Statement of Peter A. A. Berle
 President of the National Audubon Society
 September 9, 1994

Mr. President and distinguished Delegates, my name
 is Peter A. A. Berle. I serve as president and chief
 executive officer of the National Audubon Society, an
 American environmental NGO with over 6000,000
 members devoted to the protection of ecosystems for the
 benefit of wildlife, humankind and biodiversity.

As an environmentalist I appear before you because
 issues of population stabilization and consumption are the
 ultimate environmental issues of our time. Our work to
 clean the air, preserve the quality of our water and to
 protect open space and wildlife is marginal at best if we do

not stabilize population growth and stop the waste which irrational production and consumption create.

We have learned that women's health care, literacy, economic opportunity and ability to make choices about numbers and spacing of children are requisite to population stabilization. We have also learned that these important human rights are hard to secure in societies enslaved by poverty. The result is that development is an essential element of our consideration.

And here is the dilemma. We must develop in order to secure the rights and well-being for women and society as a whole upon which our future depends. But development which puts pesticides in our water, lead and other toxics in the air, development which eliminates our forests and topsoils and destroys the natural beauty which inspires our souls threatens the future of our planet.

This conference must insure that when we talk about development we mean sustainable development. We must insure that our work builds on and reaffirms the principles we fought so hard to establish in Rio two years ago. Otherwise we will be little more than a globe-trotting bunch of conventioners momentarily mesmerized by the issues of the day only to rush off to the next global conference when this one is over.

The Action Plan under consideration here in Cairo calls for donor countries to commit \$5.7 billion annually

the year 2000 to provide basic reproductive health and contraceptive services to all women on the globe. This anticipates that twice the amount will be allocated by developing countries. Within this framework we must leave here resolute to see that funds are indeed committed. Some will say that the costs are too high. Others will say that national security requires vast expenditures for armaments instead. Success will require the best persuasive powers of all of us, from donor and developing countries alike. Those with limited vision will argue that women's health issues must always be secondary. But the fact is that unless this tangible and achievable goal of the Action Plan is met, our future will be defined by an ever shrinking resource base and bitter conflict as too many fight over too little to benefit too few.

As advocates here in Cairo we know that real security and a planet which future generations can inhabit is achievable. We know we are at a special point in history. In earlier times nature determined whether humans lived or died. Today humans determine whether humans and nature survive. Therefore, we must act. Otherwise the hopes and aspirations we define here will slip away and we may not get a choice to revive them again.

For further information, please contact: popin@undp.org
POPIN Gopher site: <gopher://gopher.undp.org/11/ungophers/popin>
POPIN WWW site: <http://www.undp.org/popin>