



94-09-09: Statement of ILO, Mrs. Mary Chinery-Hesse

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AS WRITTEN

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (ICPD)

CAIRO, EGYPT, 5-13 SEPTEMBER, 1994

ADDRESS BY

MRS. MARY CHIN

DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL,

INTERNATIONAL LABOR OFFICE

GENEVA

TO THE ICPD

MR. PRESIDENT

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

EXCELLENCIES

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I BRING TO YOU THE GREETINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION, AND ITS DIRECTOR GENERAL, MR. MICHEL HANSENNE. I WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND TO YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, MY PERSONAL BEST WISHES FOR THE CHALLENGING WORK AHEAD OF US.

MR. PRESIDENT,

THIS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT COINCIDES WITH THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION AND THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION OF PHILADELPHIA WHICH SET OUT THE ORGANIZATION'S FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, MICHEL HANSENNE, CHOSE AS THE ORGANIZING CONCEPT FOR THIS OCCASION "DEFENDING VALUES, PROMOTING CHANGE". I CANNOT FIND A MOTTO MORE FITTING FOR THIS CONFERENCE.

IN REVIEWING THE PLAN OF ACTION BEFORE THIS CONFERENCE, I COULD NOT HELP BUT BE STRUCK BY THE COMMONALITY OF ITS OBJECTIVES AND THOSE OF THE ILO, AND THE EMPHASIS IT PLACES ON ILO CONCERNS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION.

FIFTY YEARS AGO, THE DECLARATION OF PHILADELPHIA AFFIRMED: " ALL HUMAN BEINGS, IRRESPECTIVE OF RACE, CREED OR SEX, HAVE THE RIGHT TO PURSUE BOTH THEIR MATERIAL WELL-BEING AND THEIR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN CONDITIONS OF FREEDOM AND DIGNITY, ECONOMIC SECURITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY". THIS OBJECTIVE CAN ONLY BE MET IN A SUSTAINABLE MANNER THROUGH PRODUCTIVE, FREELY CHOSEN EMPLOYMENT. HOWEVER THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT HAS REACHED THE SAME HEIGHTS OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION, AND AS WE REACH THE END OF THE CENTURY, THE ILO ESTIMATES THAT ABOUT 40 MILLION NEW JOBS WILL NEED TO BE CREATED EVERY YEAR TO ABSORB THE WORLD'S INCREASING LABOR FORCE.

AGAIN, THE DECLARATION OF PHILADELPHIA STATED THAT "POVERTY ANYWHERE CONSTITUTES A DANGER TO PROSPERITY EVERYWHERE". I NEED NOT REMIND, THIS GATHERING THAT ABOUT 1.2 BILLION, OR ONE FIFTH OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION LIVES IN ABSOLUTE POVERTY. AS STATED IN THE DOCUMENT BEFORE US, THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE IS TO MEET THE NEEDS AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS. POPULATION ISSUES ARE PLACED IN THE WIDER PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEED FOR A MORE PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT AND THE ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY. THIS APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT COINCIDES WITH THAT OF THE ILO WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN FOCUSED ON SOCIAL PROGRESS AND QUALITY OF LIFE SIDE BY SIDE WITH GROWTH AND EFFICIENCY.

MR. PRESIDENT,

HAVING LISTENED TO THE MANY DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE TAKEN THE FLOOR BEFORE ME, I CAN SAY THAT THREE CLEAR MESSAGES EMERGE:

FIRST, THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR LESS TALKING AND MORE ACTION. WE OWE IT TO OURSELVES NOT TO ALLOW THIS GATHERING TO BE "YET ANOTHER CONFERENCE", A "TALKING SHOP".

SECONDLY, WHILE THERE IS UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE NEED FOR ACTION, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE APPROACH TO POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT MUST RESPECT THE CULTURAL, HISTORICAL AND SPIRITUAL SPECIFICITY OF EACH COUNTRY. IN THIS RESPECT, I CAN ONLY UNDERLINE THE WORDS OF PRESIDENT MUBARAK WHEN HE SAID "THIS CONFERENCE COMBINES PEOPLE 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"

FINALLY, THAT WHATEVER ACTION WE MAY DECIDE UPON, THE BASIC CRITERIA FOR OUR DECISION, MUST BE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE FREEDOM OF PEOPLE TO SHAPE THEIR OWN DESTINY BY EXERCISING THEIR OWN CHOICES.

MR. PRESIDENT,

IT HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE ILO THAT DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN SOCIAL PROGRESS. ONE OF THE BASIC RATIONALES FOR ILO'S INVOLVEMENT IN POPULATION AND RELATED ACTIVITIES IS THAT RAPID POPULATION GROWTH, DIRECTLY AFFECTS THE DEMAND FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. UNBALANCED POPULATION GROWTH, AND UNEVEN POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, UNDERMINES THE ATTAINMENT OF THE CORE OF ILO OBJECTIVES OF PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE, FULL AND FREELY CHOSEN PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT, THE DIGNITY OF WORKERS AND IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS.

THE ILO IS WELL-PLACED TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE POPULATION ISSUES OUTLINED IN THE PLAN OF ACTION. IN ITS SEARCH FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, THE ORGANIZATION HAS ADOPTED NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS THAT HAVE DIRECT BEARING ON DEMOGRAPHIC MATTERS. THESE INCLUDE CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH SERVE TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT WORKERS; THOSE THAT ADDRESS EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND TREATMENT FOR WOMEN AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS; THOSE THAT PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION; AND, FINALLY THOSE ON MATERNITY AND CONDITIONS OF WORK OF WORKERS WITH FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES.

THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION BEFORE US ALSO URGES COUNTRIES TO TAKE MEASURES TO ELIMINATE ALL KINDS OF EXPLOITATION AND HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN (INCLUDING TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND FORCED PROSTITUTION). ILO CONVENTIONS ON FORCED LABOR ARE IMPORTANT INSTRUMENTS

OF REDRESS IN THE CONTINUING BATTLE AGAINST SUCH ABUSES. MY ORGANIZATION CAN ONLY APPLAUD AND SUPPORT ANY ACTION TO EMPOWER AND IMPROVE THE STATUS OF WOMEN, AND GIVE THEM EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES WITH MEN. IN THIS RESPECT, WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE BEIJING CONFERENCE AS YET ANOTHER BUILDING BLOCK IN OUR ENDEAVOR TO CREATE A JUST NEW WORLD.

MR. PRESIDENT,

THE ISSUES UNDER CONSIDERATION IN THE PLAN OF ACTION ARE INTERLINKED IN VERY COMPLEX WAYS, SUCH THAT NEITHER ECONOMIC, SOCIAL NOR DEMOGRAPHIC GOALS CAN BE PURSUED IN ISOLATION. MOREOVER, ACHIEVEMENT OF EACH IS PROMOTED BY THE DEGREE TO WHICH SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY REMAIN CENTRAL GOALS OF THE NATIONAL AUTHORITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. IN SUM, ALL OUR ACTIONS SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO ONE AND THE SAME OBJECTIVE: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BASED ON HIGH QUALITY GROWTH WITH EQUITY .

THE ILO, I ASSURE YOU, CAN PLAY A VERY EFFECTIVE ROLE IN SUPPORT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POPULATION PROGRAMME OF ACTION. WE CAN DRAW CONSIDERABLE STRENGTH FROM OUR UNIQUE TRIPARTITE STRUCTURE, WHICH INCLUDES NOT ONLY GOVERNMENTS BUT ALSO WORKERS' AND EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS. THE PRINCIPLE OF TRIPARTITE CONSULTATION AND ACTION IS WHAT IS NEEDED IN THE WORLD OF TODAY - A WORLD THAT IS TRYING TO FIND A NEW BALANCE BETWEEN THE STATE, THE MARKET AND SOCIETY. TRIPARTISM PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR A BROADER REPRESENTATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE DIALOGUE ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING POPULATION POLICY THE ILO IS WELL PLACED TO PROMOTE THE PARTNERSHIP OF NOT ONLY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, BUT ALSO THAT OF GOVERNMENTS, WORKERS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN IDENTIFYING NEW AREAS OF CO-OPERATION AS CALLED FOR IN THE PROGRAMME. IN THIS RESPECT, THE ILO WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY THE ROLE OF THE 'SOCIAL PILLAR' OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN AS MUCH AS

ITS CENTRAL MANDATES - PROMOTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND TREATMENT - ARE BASIC PLATFORMS FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS OF THIS CONFERENCE'S PROGRAMME OF ACTION.

ACTIONS TO ADDRESS POPULATION ISSUES MUST ALSO BE PRACTICAL WE MUST STRIVE TO ADOPT STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS THAT HAVE A TIME SCOPE, ADDRESS CONCRETE AND WELL-DEFINED PROBLEMS ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC PRIORITIES AND TO DO SO WITHIN THE EXISTING RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS. I WOULD THEREFORE LIKE TO CALL UPON THIS CONFERENCE TO MOVE BEYOND OBJECTIVES THAT ARE TOO GENERAL TOWARDS SPECIFIC, WELL-DESIGNED AND FEASIBLE ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES THAT ARE ALSO REALISTIC AND IMPLEMENTABLE. IN ILO'S EXPERIENCE, THIS IMPLIES INCREASING THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF MEMBER STATES TO DESIGN, IMPLEMENT AND MANAGE POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES. IT ALSO IMPLIES INCREASING THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE GRASS ROOTS POPULATIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, AND ENSURING CONTINUOUS EVALUATION OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS ADOPTED.

MR. PRESIDENT,

THE SECRETARY GENERAL, DR BOUTROS-BOUTROS GHALI, HAS ASKED US TO FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON "RIGOR TOLERANCE AND CONSCIENCE", AND I AM SURE THAT WE HAVE JUST DONE THAT.

WE ARE GATHERED HERE FOR A HISTORIC EVENT: TO TURN "THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FROM WORDS TO ACTION. I AM SURE THAT NO ONE HERE WILL DISPUTE THE FACT THAT WE HAVE BEEN PARTY TO THE MAKING OF A SMALL MIRACLE IN THE LAND OF MIRACLES: EGYPT, WHOSE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE HAVE SPARED NO EFFORT TO MAKE THIS EVENT A SUCCESS. TO THEM I SAY "SHUKRAN". AND LIKE ALL MIRACLES, IT TAKES A WOMAN TO DELIVER IT. TO MY FRIEND AND

COLLEAGUE, NAFIS SADEK I SAY YOU HAVE MADE THE POINT FOR US ALL.

IN CONCLUSION, I WISH TO SAY THAT THE FINAL TEST FOR ALL OF US IS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE "PLAN OF ACTION". WE SHALL ALL BE JUDGED BY THIS.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.

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