



MESSAGE OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION TO THE CAIRO CONFERENCE

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AS WRITTEN

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TO THE CAIRO CONFERENCE

Over a period of many years the Inter-Parliamentary Union has taken a particular interest in population issues and has always dealt with them not as a sector-based problem but as an aspect of development. The Union thus regards the International Conference on Population and Development as a major event, and has decided to give it its full support

Consequently, it has encouraged Parliaments to take an active part in the preparatory work and discussions, and to ensure a strong parliamentary presence at the Conference itself. Furthermore, it has decided to make its own contribution in the form of a document reflecting the state of its thinking and the consensus positions reached on population issues.

The Message of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the Cairo Conference, which is based on the texts adopted at the Union's statutory and specialized meetings in past years, sets out the organization's basic views and a number of its recommendations. It covers only those issues on which there is as yet little or no intergovernmental consensus, and does not contain those recommendations already included in the preparatory document for the Cairo Conference.

THE UNION'S THINKING ON POPULATION ISSUES

The Inter-Parliamentary Union first discussed population issues as long ago as 1896, when it sought a solution to the problems of

immigrants and foreigners. In 1924, it set up a Social and Economic Committee to study the different aspects of demographic change and its impact on the development of societies.

Three main principles underpin the Union's thinking and action with regard to population:

- Respect for the rights of the individual;
- Recognition of national sovereignty,
- Equality between peoples, between the sexes and between generations.

The Union's position is based on a century of sometimes intense parliamentary study and discussion at twenty-five statutory conferences and at two specialized conferences dealing with population issues.

Since demographic change and its implications raise questions relating to many different spheres of activity, the solution of the problems involved requires an integrated approach. It is the Union's opinion that only favourable social conditions, political independence, a pluralistic democracy and economic progress, which transmit individual values and bring about social change, can solve the problems caused by demographic imbalances.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORLDWIDE
PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNITY

THE ROLE OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The globalization of production and trade has led to radically new scenarios. Major economic operations are carried out in conditions that are far from equitable and thus affect the population, particularly in the developing countries. Ever since 1966 the Union has affirmed the legitimacy of population policies and has maintained that as far as development is concerned, they are no less important than increased material wealth. Poverty is now universally recognized as a major cause of political instability within and between countries.

International relations

There is an urgent need to develop greater transparency in economic transactions so that the implications for developing countries in their pursuit of economic growth and social welfare can be better gauged

Economic efficiency can be sustained only by establishing democratic structures, improving social and economic justice and ensuring respect for human rights.

Sustainable development

To achieve sustainable development, development must be viewed from a different perspective - that of human development, which gives priority to combating poverty.

The solution of the problems of rapid population growth, high

mortality and morbidity, illiteracy, environmental degradation, hunger and food security is closely linked with the eradication of poverty.

The eradication of poverty is the shared responsibility of all countries. Each State must therefore develop its own plan to combat all forms of poverty and support human development

As appropriate, such plans must include basic health care, education, housing, cross-sectoral policies and special measures to assist vulnerable groups and populations living in ecologically vulnerable areas.

The objectives of the health sector must be associated with those of the other sectors so that common goals may be identified.

Sustainable development requires that economic growth be pursued without endangering the natural environment

Human impact on nature depends both on the number of people and how much energy and resources each person uses or wastes.

The adoption of sound land-use planning measures should ensure that pressure resulting from the activities and way of life of a population that is too dense and/or is growing too rapidly does not destroy resources.

Employment

Increased production no longer automatically means more jobs. The developing countries and the developed countries alike must urgently

review their economic and social policies so as to give priority to job creation, since that is the best method of enabling more people to enjoy the benefits of growth.

WOMEN AT THE CORE OF THE STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Since the Bucharest Conference in 1974 the Union has emphasized the links between development, the status of women and family planning. Because of the external factors affecting the status of women, development problems cannot be solved unless women participate in all areas of social, economic and political life on an equal footing with men.

Models

Without destabilizing cultures or imposing values foreign to the national culture, it is important to enhance or re-enhance women's dignity and to allow the emergence of a more balanced image of the capacity of men and women to participate in the management of private and public affairs.

The two complementary concepts of parity and partnership should be developed in order to disseminate the idea that women and men are different but nonetheless equal, and that a creative synergy can help them effectively tackle their own problems and those of the community.

The images and models transmitted through education, the media and advertising messages should be changed so as to eliminate any suggestion that one sex is superior to the other.

The role of women in the home must be recognized and enhanced, particularly through the institution of a method to remunerate the work they perform there

The economic value of domestic work must be recognized and considered as part of the gross national product.

Education

Education and training must be broad-based and launched as a system of lifelong learning so as to strike a new balance between practical and academic skills.

Campaigns must be organized to overcome the prejudices of parents and to encourage families to send their daughters to school. In that connection, special provisions and benefits in the form of grants or allowances should overcome such material obstacles as may be encountered by parents.

Educational material must be the same for both sexes and must not give or suggest an image of men's superiority over women.

Health and family planning

Health must be considered as a fundamental right and an objective in itself. Family planning is a fundamental right of women.

Family planning and sex education must be integrated into

health services so that terminations of pregnancy are resorted to only in exceptional cases and, if possible, only under proper medical conditions.

It is important to change attitudes, reform structures and mobilize sufficient resources to improve health and family planning services so as to reduce the high population growth affecting the health of mothers and children.

Legislation

The principle of equality between men and women must be explicitly spelt out in basic legislation. It must be recognized in the Constitution or in any other basic text of constitutional rank

A special law must define the various practical applications of the principle of equality and create a mechanism to ensure respect for it.

Customary law must be harmonized with positive law wherever it tends to disadvantage women.

Men and women must receive sufficient information on their rights and responsibilities.

National legislation and health programmes must ensure respect for women's rights with regard to procreation, particularly their right to be informed about family planning methods and to have safe methods of contraception.

In the same spirit, national legislation must guarantee the moral and physical integrity of women through stringent legislation that punishes conjugal violence and physical mutilation of women.

Girls and boys must be subject to the same obligatory period of school attendance so as to facilitate access to schooling for girls under legal conditions identical to those for boys.

Measures must be taken to promote the access of women to professional training and employment on equal terms with men.

Measures must be taken to give equally qualified men and women equal opportunities to belong to decision-making bodies at the local, provincial and national levels.

The participation of a proportion of women in government must be established as one of the rules of democracy. All governments must thus include a proportion of women.

A parliamentary committee composed of men and women whose specific terms of reference are to deal with issues relating to the status of women must make a significant contribution to the implementation of the principle of equality in all national legislation.

THE PROTECTION AND INTEGRATION OF THE ELDERLY

Since 1984 the Union has been studying the impact of changes in the demographic structure and has been drawing governments' attention to the need to establish social policies for the protection of the elderly. By the year 2000 the number of people over the age of 80 will have

increased by 70 per cent in a number of countries.

Specific needs

The specific needs of the elderly should be identified so that their well-being can be better ensured. Medical care is a key need.

Governments, the private sector, families and society as a whole all have responsibility for the way in which the elderly are treated.

Legislation

The fundamental rights of the elderly must be recognized.

The elderly must not be discriminated against in any way - on the basis of sex, income, education, and so forth - or marginalized.

o In adopting laws and social measures, parliamentarians must bear in mind that a technological approach to illness is tending to replace a human approach to the patient. As a result, there is a loss of individual perspective, and the elderly have a very strong feeling of self dispossession because of their great vulnerability.

PARLIAMENTARIANS, KEY PROTAGONISTS IN DEVELOPMENT

A supportive national and international climate is an essential precondition for sustainable development. With that in mind, parliamentarians must participate in the elaboration of innovative

mechanisms to promote equitable multilateral relations and the democratization of decision-making processes for the world economy.

Parliamentarians have a unique contribution to make in shaping the institutions and policies for a more interdependent world. Parliaments must be more involved in the governance of those institutions.

The Giro Conference must contribute to establishing a new mandate for parliaments in the sphere of programs dealing with demographic parameters and the status of women.

Efforts to promote a greater awareness of information for the interrelationships between demographic change and sustainable development must include the better provision of information for parliamentarians, decision-makers, planners and the general public.

In view of the central role of women in achieving sustainable development, parliamentarians must ensure that a significant percentage of official development assistance is earmarked for programs and projects which promote the participation of women, and that these are managed by women.

The periodic evaluation of progress towards implementing global targets and the regular exchange of information on the situation of the elderly must be monitored by parliamentarians.

Parliamentarians must ensure the mobilization of the essential financial resources for making a reality of the commitments under undertaken at the Cairo Conference.

ACTION IN SUPPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

(Cairo, 5-13 September 1994)

Resolution adopted without a vote by the Inter-Parliamentary Council
at its 154th session (Paris, 21 March 1994)

The Inter-Parliamentary Council,

Noting with satisfaction that, by decision of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, a third international conference on population questions will be held in Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994,

Recalling that, since its creation, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has considered population questions with sustained interest and has regularly included these issues in its-,s debates, and stressing that it has supported the United Nations Population Fund by enriching the elaboration of intergovernmental consensus by contributing the thinking of the interparliamentary community,

Concerned by the growth of demographic and socio-economic trends likely to strengthen the intra-national and international imbalances relating to the standard and quality of life of individuals,

Aware of the importance of guaranteeing exercise of reproductive rights in the context of respect for human rights, and recognizing that

there is a close relationship between the implementation of adequate information and reproductive health care policies and success in the world-wide struggle against AIDS,

Convinced that the International Conference on Population and Development will be an essential step in the series of United Nations Conferences aiming to strengthen political resolve and to combat poverty and the inequalities and imbalances prevailing in many spheres of the lives of individuals and communities, as advocated by the world-wide parliamentary community in the final document of the Conference on "North-South Dialogue for Global Prosperity" held in Ottawa in October 1993,

Noting also that the establishment of conditions for sustainable development at the planetary level call for profound changes in all societies, particularly as regards attitudes, economic organization, political relations and the choice of technologies, and that these changes must take account of and go hand in hand with a fundamental revision of the management of the demographic characteristics of the various populations,

1. Welcomes the fact that the International Conference on Population Development is adopting an overall and pluridisciplinary approach through which population policies are a key element of human and sustainable development, of which equality for women, health and education are fundamental components that are also among the priority concerns of the Union;

2. Supports the preparation of the Conference on Population and Development hoping it will contribute to strengthening concerted action by the international community based on:

- The importance of considering demographic changes of populations as a key parameter for sustainable development;

- The urgent need to define the modalities for implementing and following up population programmes;

- The need to mobilize the essential financial resources for making that commitment a reality;

3. Requests parliaments and MPs to keep themselves informed about the state of preparation of the Conference and to participate actively in the work and discussions underway in that respect;

4. Calls on parliaments to ensure that MPs are included in national delegations to the Conference;

5. Requests the Secretary General of the Union to prepare a document reflecting the work of IPU and the state of the thinking and consensus within the Organization on population issues and to present it as the Union's contribution to the Cairo Conference in September 1994;

6. Invites the Secretary-General of the Conference to provide the Union with a summary of the results of the Cairo Conference including a synopsis of the programme of action and modalities for implementation which are of particular interest to MPs;

7. Requests the Union's Executive Committee to consider the results of the Conference in order to envisage appropriate action by which the Union and its members can contribute to the implementation and

follow-up of the Plan of Action on Population.

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